


BUILDERS OF MODERN INDIA



MOTILAL NEHRU

B. R. NANDA



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MOTILAL NEHRU

ABOUT THE SERIES

The object of the Series is the publication of biographies of those eminent sons and daughters of India who have been mainly instrumental in our national renaissance and the struggle for independence.

It is a matter of regret that, except in a few cases, no authoritative biographies are available. It is essential for the present and coming generations to know something about these great men and women. The Series has been planned to remove this lacuna. It is proposed to publish handy volumes containing simple and short biographies of our eminent leaders written by competent persons who know their subject well. The books in the Series will be of between 200 to 300 pages and are not intended either to be comprehensive studies or to replace more elaborate biographies.

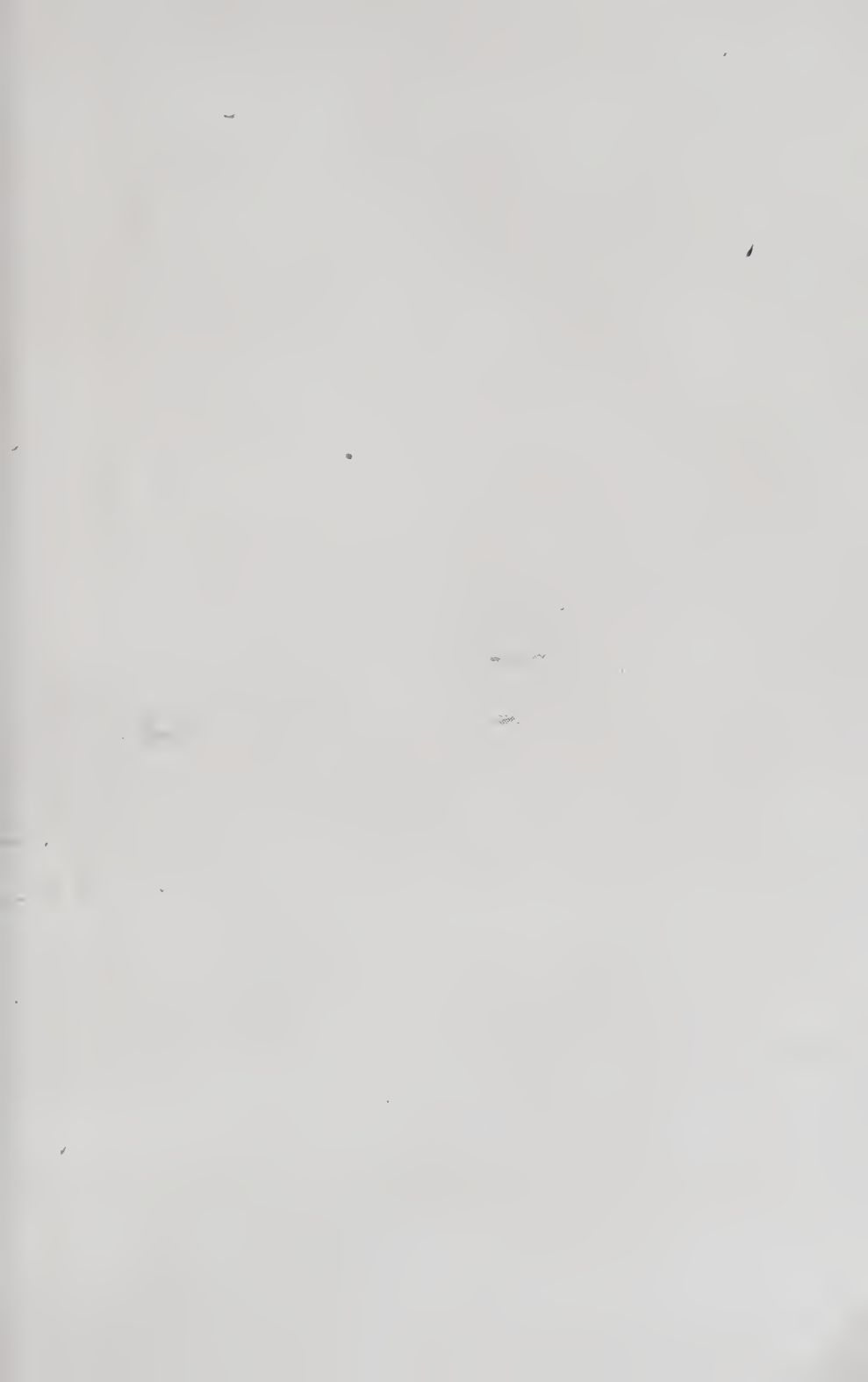
Though desirable, it may not be possible to publish the biographies in a chronological order. The work of writing these lives has to be entrusted to persons who are well equipped to do so and, therefore, for practical reasons, it is possible that there might be no historical sequence observed. I hope, however, that within a short period all eminent national personalities will figure in this Series.

I am grateful to my esteemed friend, Shri R. R. Diwakar, former Governor of Bihar, for agreeing to take up the onerous task of general editorship of this Series. Shri Diwakar's experience as a writer, as an editor and as a journalist, and his eminence in these field, will help in getting the best possible books published in the Series.

A list of works that are being taken in hand immediately is printed separately.

NEW DELHI
25th November 1959.

B. V. KESKAR





Builders of Modern India

MOTILAL NEHRU

B. R. NANDA

PUBLICATIONS DIVISION
MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING
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To My Father

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am deeply grateful to Shri Jawaharlal Nehru for kindly permitting me to consult and use extracts from his private papers, for finding time, in the midst of his other pressing engagements, to meet me on a number of occasions, and for answering my many questions.

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Shri V. C. Joshi has helped me in correcting proofs and my son Naren has assisted me in the preparation of the index.

I need hardly add that I alone bear responsibility for the views expressed in this book and for all its shortcomings.

And finally, I owe a profound debt of gratitude to my wife for her constant sympathy and support during the many months when this work was under preparation.

B. R. N.

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CHAPTER ONE
EARLY YEARS

The Nehrus originally belonged to the valley of Kashmir, which is famous for its lofty mountains, dancing brooks, flower-filled meadows and beautiful women. Early in the eighteenth century it was also noted for its scholars; one of them, Pandit Raj Kaul, caught the eye of the Mughal king Farukhsiyar when he visited Kashmir about the year 1716, and was persuaded to migrate to Delhi, the imperial capital, where he was granted a house situated on the canal which then ran through the city. Living on the bank of the canal (*nahar*), Raj Kaul's descendants came to be known in the Kashmiri community as 'Nehrus', or rather 'Kaul-Nehrus'. Raj Kaul also received a few villages as *jagir* from the Mughal Emperor. But unfortunately his patron did not live long. With the decline of the imperial authority during the following years his *jagir* dwindled until it amounted to no more than zamindari rights in certain lands. The last beneficiaries of these rights were Raj Kaul's grandsons, Mausam Ram Kaul and Saheb Ram Kaul. Mausam Ram's son, Lakshmi Narayan, became the first *vakil* of the East India Company at the Mughal court of Delhi. Lakshmi Narayan's son Ganga Dhar—the father of Motilal Nehru and the grand-father of Jawaharlal Nehru—was a police officer in Delhi when the Mutiny broke out in 1857.

The upheaval of 1857 uprooted Ganga Dhar from Delhi, where his ancestors had been settled for nearly 150 years. He was lucky to escape with his family, but he lost his job and almost everything he possessed. It is not known whether he tried to restore his fortunes in Agra, but he had not long to live. Early in 1861, he died at the age of thirty-

four. Three months after his death, on May 6, 1861, his wife Jeorani gave birth to a son. He was named Motilal.

The death of her husband had been a terrible blow to Jeorani. It was one of those catastrophes under the weight of which many an Indian family of ancient lineage has been known to sink into permanent oblivion. Luckily her elder sons Bansi Dhar and Nand Lal were plucky boys and were able to stand on their own feet. Bansi Dhar secured a job as a 'judgment-writer' in the *Sadar Diwani Adalat* at Agra and rose to the position of a subordinate judge.

Since Bansi Dhar was in government service and liable to frequent transfers, Motilal was brought up by Nand Lal. Between these two there grew up a strong bond of affection, a happy blend of the filial and fraternal of which the Hindu joint family, despite its many faults, furnishes perhaps the finest examples.

Nand Lal secured a job in the small state of Khetri in Rajasthan, where he became a teacher, then private secretary to Raja Fateh Singh, and finally the *Diwan* (chief minister). Nand Lal proved an efficient administrator and served in Khetri till the end of 1870. On November 30th of that year, Raja Fateh Singh died at Delhi. Nand Lal quitted Khetri, qualified as a lawyer and began to practise law in Agra. When the High Court was transferred to Allahabad, he moved with it.

Meanwhile Motilal was growing up into a vivacious boy. At Khetri, where his brother was the *Diwan*, he was taught by Qazi Sadruddin, the tutor of Raja Fateh Singh. Till the age of twelve he read only Arabic and Persian. In the latter language his proficiency was striking enough to command the respect of men much older than himself. He joined the high school at Cawnpore where Bansi Dhar was posted. Characteristic letters from Motilal to the head master have fortunately survived.

'To

H. Powell Esq.

Head Master of Ch. Ch. School,
Cawnpore.

Respected Sir,

I respectfully beg to inform your honour that I am quite prepared for the examination of both classes *i.e.* 4th and 5th.

Perhaps you know that when I informed to the Principal for my promotion in the 4th class, he refused and said, "the other boys have also right as you have". Therefore, now, I wish to be promoted in the 4th class by my own power.

Hoping that you will grant my petition.

I remain,

Sir,

Your obedient student,
Moti Lal.'

The confidence and courage of Motilal, who was hardly twelve, broke through the barriers of the arbitrary spelling and grammar of an alien tongue, which he had only just started learning and in which he was before long to become remarkably fluent.

Motilal was far from being a bookworm. Athletic, fond of outdoor sports, particularly wrestling, brimming over with an insatiable curiosity and zest for life, he took to the playground and places of amusement with enthusiasm, and between whiles attended his classes. His career at the Muir College at Allahabad was not noted for academic distinction: his quick wits and high spirits landed him in many an escapade, from which he was extricated by Principal Harrison and his British colleagues, who conceived a strong liking for this intelligent, lively and restless Kashmiri youth. Englishmen teaching in Indian colleges may have been no

more friendly to nationalist aspirations than the rest of their compatriots in India, but it would be wrong to think of them as cogs in the imperial machine like magistrates and police officials. Between the English professors and their Indian pupils there were often bonds of sympathy, understanding and even friendship. On Motilal a deep and lasting impression was left by the affectionate solicitude of Principal Harrison, one of whose letters he carefully preserved. The contact with his English professors was a strong formative influence, implanting an intelligent, rational, sceptical attitude to life and a strong admiration for English culture and English institutions. University education did not load Motilal with book-learning; but it helped to open for him a window on the world—the wide western world.

Motilal sat for his degree but, thinking he had done his first paper badly, stayed away from the rest of the examination. As it turned out, he had answered his first paper fairly well. His university life thus ended inconclusively and ingloriously. For an Indian youth who had inherited neither money nor property, to play with his educational career was to play with his future and to face the frustration of a low-paid job for the rest of his life. Fortunately, Motilal pulled himself together in time. He decided to follow the legal profession in which his elder brother Nand Lal had already achieved a moderate success. He worked hard and topped the list of successful candidates in the *vakils'* examination. In 1883 he set up as a lawyer at Cawnpore under the aegis of Pandit Prithinath, a senior lawyer and a friend of the family.

Nand Lal, Motilal's elder brother, had been married at the age of twelve at Delhi in 1857, the year of the Mutiny; the ceremony was too important to be put off even in the midst of that great upheaval. Child marriage was then the rule among Kashmiri Brahmins and Motilal was also marri-

ed and had a son while still in his teens. But the marriage ended tragically : mother and child both died. Soon afterwards Motilal married again. Swarup Rani, his second wife, belonged to a fresher stock from Kashmir; her family, the Thussus, unlike the Nehrus, had migrated to the plains comparatively recently. She was *petite*, with a 'Dresden china perfection' of complexion and features, hazel eyes, chestnut-brown hair and exquisitely shaped hands and feet. The youngest of four children, she had been spoiled by her parents; it was not easy for her to fit into her husband's household, peopled by a host of relatives and dominated by a formidable mother-in-law whose fierce temper was a byword in the town.

The beautiful Swarup Rani and handsome Motilal made a charming pair. They had a few years of happiness before Swarup Rani's ill-health cast its long shadow over their domestic life. Their first child, a son, did not live. On November 14, 1889, their second child was born. He was named Jawaharlal. The birth of a son and heir is the high-watermark of happiness in a Hindu family. In Motilal's case it was an occasion for special rejoicing, because of the tragedy of his first marriage.

Meanwhile, Motilal had made a good start with his legal practice. The district courts of Cawnpore did not offer full scope for his ambition. In 1886, after he had completed his three years' apprenticeship, he decided to move to Allaha-bad, the seat of the High Court, where Nand Lal had a lucrative practice. Nand Lal was so delighted when he heard young Motilal argue his first case that he embraced him in the court-room.

Once again destiny dealt Motilal a cruel blow. In April 1887, Nand Lal died at the age of forty-two, leaving behind him his wife Nandrani, two daughters and five sons, Biharilal, Mohanlal, Shamlal, Kishenlal and Brijlal. At the

age of twenty-five, Motilal found himself head of a large family, its sole bread-winner. He had come to Allahabad for greater opportunities; he found only heavier burdens. But he was not the man to be overwhelmed by adversity. The loss of his beloved brother gave a keener edge to his ambition. The exuberant energy which had been dissipated in childish pranks and youthful follies had now a single aim—success in his profession.

CHAPTER TWO

THE PROFESSION OF LAW

Allahabad may seem a sleepy little town today, but in the last decade of the nineteenth century, to a young lawyer anxious to make a place for himself in the world, it must have seemed a land of opportunity. It was the capital of the North Western Provinces, as the United Provinces were then called. It was the seat of the university and the High Court, and the centre of the English language press which moulded the opinion of Europeans and educated Indians in northern India.

Motilal received only five rupees for his first brief, but he was fortunate in not having a long uphill struggle : his success was as rapid as it was spectacular. In his early thirties, he was making nearly Rs. 2,000 a month, a considerable sum for an up-country lawyer at that time; in his early forties his income had reached five figures. He was one of the four brilliant *vakils* whom Chief Justice Sir John Edge admitted to the roll of advocates of the Allahabad High Court in 1896, the others being Pandit (later Sir) Sunderlal, Munshi Ram Prasad and Mr. Jogendranath Choudhuri. In August 1909, he received permission to appear and plead at the bar of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in Great Britain.

Success came easily to Motilal because he possessed a natural shrewdness, sound common sense and the gift of persuasive advocacy. K. N. Katju, one of his younger contemporaries, thus explains the secret of his eminence at the Bar : 'Pandit Motilal was handsome. He dressed fastidiously. He was by no means eloquent, but keen in debate

and incisive in argument. He radiated cheerfulness and good humour... While Pandit Motilal was in the court and on his legs, the atmosphere seemed surcharged with sunshine.' He also had the saving grace of humour. Once in the course of his address to the jury he said he did not want to confuse it. 'Never mind the jury,' cut in the judge, 'the jury can look after itself.' 'My Lord,' Motilal replied, 'that may be so, but I want it to look after my client.'

But all his gifts would not have brought him to the top without another quality of which he had given little promise in his youth—industry. There is no short cut to success in the legal profession. Every day brings new battles of wits, new briefs with new intricacies of law, fresh masses of evidence to be sifted, marshalled and digested. This means working hard late at night or first thing in the morning, as the days are taken up with interviews with clients and appearances in court.

Motilal was a civil lawyer. Most of his important cases were about disputed succession to property belonging to big zamindars and talukdars. The stakes were high and so were the fees. The rival claimants engaged the foremost lawyers in the land. The intricacies of the Hindu law of inheritance were further complicated by the thick folds of insinuation and intrigue in which such disputes were often shrouded. The income from an estate was large enough to make it worth while for the party in possession to prolong the course of litigation, and for the rival party to fight for it to the bitter end. One of these cases which concerned the Lakhna estate came to Motilal in 1894 and remained with him for more than thirty years—long after he had given up active practice.

It was this case which elicited from Chief Justice Sir Grimwood Mears the memorable compliment that 'no lawyer in the world could have done that case better than

Pandit Motilal had done it'. Sir Grimwood formed the highest judgment of Motilal's talents. 'When I came to Allahabad,' he recalled, 'and was beginning to learn the names and positions of the various members of the Bar, I was struck with the respect and pride with which all his colleagues at the Bar spoke of Pandit Motilal Nehru. When I had the pleasure of meeting him, I understood the reasons for the affection with which he was regarded. . . . He had a profusion of gifts; knowledge came easily to him, and as advocate he had the art of presenting his case in its most attractive form. Every fact fell into its proper place in the narration of the story and was emphasized in just the right degree. He had an exquisite public speaking voice and a charm of manner which made it a pleasure to listen to him . . . With his wide range of reading and the pleasure that he had taken in travel he was a very delightful companion, and wherever he sat at a table that was the head of the table and there was the centre of interest.'

What distinguished Motilal was not that he earned enormous sums of money : there were other lawyers in Allahabad—Sir Sunderlal for example—who did not earn less, and there were quite a few in Bombay and Calcutta who earned more. But only of Motilal could it perhaps be said that expenditure rose *pari passu* with income. He spent generously on the education of his children and of his nephews, who had become his responsibility after the death of his beloved brother Nand Lal in 1887. He moved from the densely populated city of Allahabad to a bungalow—9, Elgin Road, in the spacious and exclusive 'civil lines' where European and Eurasian families lived in solitary splendour. It was a courageous decision. It signified a desire on his part to live in healthier surroundings with greater quiet and privacy than were possible in the heart of the town. It was also a sign of the transformation which was taking place in his

life : the rise in the standard of living was accompanied by increasing westernization. Only a few hundred yards separated the 'civil lines' from the city, but mentally and socially the two were poles apart : one could almost say, as E. M. Forster said of Chandrapore, that all they had in common was 'the overarching sky'.

In 1900 Motilal purchased a house—1, Church Road—from Kanwar Parmanand of Moradabad. It was situated near Bhardwaj Ashram at a spot hallowed by association with episodes in the *Ramayana*. Motilal was struck less by the sanctity of the location than by the size and the possibilities of the estate, which included a large garden and a swimming pool. The price—Rs. 19,000—may seem ridiculously low, but the deal was made sixty years ago, and the house was in a dilapidated condition and required extensive renovation and reconstruction. Motilal opened his purse-strings to make his new home—which he named 'Anand Bhawan' (Abode of Happiness)—as comfortable as possible.

During his visits to Europe in 1899, 1900, 1905 and 1909 he spent much time and money in buying furnishings and fittings for Anand Bhawan. When the cycle was an expensive novelty, he ordered successive models through Raja Ram Motilal Guzdar and Company, a local firm of which he was part-owner. In 1904 he imported a car, the first in Allahabad and probably in the United Provinces. Next year, during his visit to Europe, he bought a new car. In 1909 when he was again in Europe he bought two cars, a Fiat and a Lancia. He already had a number of carriages and a fair-sized stable of fine Arabian horses. There is a good photograph of Motilal in breeches with his two daughters, eleven-year-old Sarup and three-year-old Krishna, on horse-back beside him. His children learned to ride almost as soon as they learned to walk. He himself was a good rider

and an excellent shot and whenever possible indulged his taste for *shikar*. His favourite sport was wrestling: when he was too old to practise it himself he enjoyed watching a bout between his servants in a part of the garden where a ground had been specially prepared for an *akhara*: he would encourage the contestants during the match and entertain them to milk afterwards.

Motilal's optimism and self-confidence had hastened his success at the Bar; his success further enhanced his self-confidence. Looking back, he could not help feeling that he had triumphed against heavy odds. A star-crossed destiny had seemed to shadow his early years: it had robbed him of his father before he was born, and then taken away his elder brother in the prime of life. Within a decade, however, the days of uncertainty and insecurity were behind him. He did not suffer from false humility; he enjoyed his success enormously and visibly and took full credit for it. He valued money, prestige and the good things of life and was glad to be able to command them.

Though he worked hard, he knew the art of relaxation. At about seven in the evening, winter and summer alike, he would entertain his friends in the house or garden, and good food, good wine, good conversation were the order of the day. Here the battles of the court-room were fought over again—quite without malice, for it was all part of a game, the great game of making money. The moving spirit of these gatherings was always the host himself: his wit and exuberance were unailing. By nine o'clock the party would be over and Motilal, still in high spirits, would join his family for a gay and leisurely dinner, sometimes eaten at table in the western fashion, sometimes squatting Indian style on the marble floor in the Indian dining-room, but always to the accompaniment of a happy flow of repartee and little intimate family jokes.

Those were the days, too, of the tennis and the big garden parties, when the great, smooth lawns of Anand Bhawan were gay with the many coloured saris of the guests and the brightness of winter flowers; when the teacups tinkled, the guests laughed and chattered, the band played; and above the cheerful sounds of the elite of Allahabad enjoying themselves could be heard the rich laughter of the host enjoying himself most of all.

CHAPTER THREE

WEST WIND

Till the age of twelve Motilal had been able to read only Persian and Arabic, but he employed European governesses and resident tutors for his children. His nephew Brijlal Nehru tells how in the nineties he decreed that everyone in the house must talk in English. The result was dead silence, as most of the women and children in that large household could not speak it. The incident reveals a new trend towards westernization in Motilal's life. He had already scandalized his orthodox colleagues by taking his midday meal in the premises of the High Court. Very strict and irrational rules governed the eating habits of Brahmins; many of them cooked their own food and ate in sanctimonious seclusion which not even their children were allowed to disturb. For Motilal, whose natural independence had been fortified by bracing contact with the British professors of Muir Central College, it was not easy to acquiesce in a social tyranny which presumed to govern the minutest detail of his daily routine.

Motilal had not been called to the Bar in England; he was a homebred *vakil*, but as his legal practice rose, his dress and manner of life began to conform more and more to the western style. One landmark in this westernizing process, as we have already seen, was his occupation in the early nineties of a bungalow in the 'civil lines' of Allahabad; another was a visit to Europe.

The visit to Europe was to prove a turning-point in Motilal's life. Of the taboos prevalent among Kashmiri Brahmins, perhaps none was stronger than that on foreign

travel : to go abroad was tantamount to a violation of the Hindu religion and punishable with excommunication from the caste—a form of social boycott which could be very trying indeed. Pandit Bishan Narayan Dhar, a prominent lawyer of Allahabad, defied the ban, but on his return to India offered to perform a *prayshchit* (purification) ceremony—a face-saving expedient which at once condoned the transgression on the part of the individual and asserted the supremacy of the caste. A bitter controversy followed. The Kashmiri community split into two factions; those who were prepared to take Bishan Narayan back into the fold came to be known as adherents of the *Bishan Sabha*, while those who would not waive the social boycott on any conditions belonged to the *Dharam Sabha*. Motilal's sympathies were decidedly with the *Bishan Sabha*. Before long Motilal and his family found themselves in the centre of the fray. Bansi Dhar, Motilal's eldest brother, who was about to retire from government service, took it into his head to visit England and witness Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897. All his life Bansi Dhar had meticulously followed the painfully elaborate ritual prescribed for orthodox Kashmiri Brahmins; not even his children were allowed to intrude upon him when he sat down to his meals in his own home. Any hopes he may have entertained of maintaining his orthodoxy intact in the course of his travels were dashed to the ground soon after he sailed. He fell seriously ill and had no alternative but to accept food and medical aid available on board the ship. The novel experience, despite the initial shock, broke the shackles of a lifetime; when Bansi Dhar returned to India a few months later, after his round-the-world trip, which included an interview with President McKinley of the United States, he had been transformed into an English, or perhaps an American gentleman. Two years later, in 1899, Motilal himself paid a visit to Europe. The visit was partly

for pleasure and partly to canvass support for Raja Ajit Singh of Khetri in his dispute with the Jaipur Durbar. Motilal sailed from Bombay in August and returned home in November.

While in London he saw Sir Mancherjee Bhownagree, an Indian member of the House of Commons. When Motilal showed him a memorandum on the claims of the Khetri State, he was so impressed that he thought it had been drawn up by Sir Edward Clark, the Advocate-General of England. 'I must confess my weakness,' Motilal wrote, 'when I say that I did feel flattered for a time.' The affairs of Khetri did not wholly absorb Motilal; he enjoyed every moment of his stay in England and recounted some of his experiences in a letter to the Private Secretary to the Raja of Khetri.

Motilal to Jagmohanlal, dated London October 22, 1899 :
'I have not been able to catch all the people for whom I had (letters of) introduction from His Highness...but I have seen a good number of them. Sir G. Seymour Fitzgerald has been of great assistance to me in getting orders for me to see the House of Lords on the opening day ceremony and other places of interest. Sir W. Lee Warner is a dry-as-dust old Anglo-Indian who did not know what to talk about except the Indian National Congress which came in for a large share of abuse. Dr. Lennox Brown is a grasping old surgeon very eager to pounce upon any one who is unfortunate enough to have a throat affection.'

Dr. Brown attributed Motilal's cough to his nose, and cauterized his nostrils on the spot. Motilal came home with a lacerated nose and minus twenty guineas. 'I must say,' Motilal wrote, 'that on all accounts Dr. Brown is one of the cleverest throat surgeons in England... The late Sir Morel Mackenzie who attended the late German Emperor for his throat disease was accompanied by our friend Dr. Brown. His name is therefore closely associated with Mackenzie's.

When talking of them both, people say *Moral Mackenzie and Immoral Brown*. The reason is that the largest class of throat patients comes from among the beautiful actresses of England, who flock to him and receive the first and foremost attention without paying a single guinea. He is the Hakim Mahmood Khan of London. I wish I had been an actress, not to save the twenty guineas, but to save the great pain I suffered, which he would never have given me if I was capable of inspiring a tender feeling in him.'

As the time came for Motilal to leave for India he confessed 'it is for the first time in my life that I feel that it is not an unmixed pleasure to return home from a country like England... I have made some friends among the nobility and gentry of England, but have not been able to do much in that direction as it is a very bad time of the year to see anybody. London is out of season and all the big people are out. Besides, the (Boer) War is the all-absorbing topic of the day and no one cares to listen to anything else'.

On return to Allahabad, Motilal refused to perform 'the purification ceremony'. Threatened by social boycott, he was not apologetic, but disdainful, defiant, aggressive. In a letter dated December 22, 1899, addressed to his friend Pandit Prithinath of Cawnpore, he explained his stand:

'My mind is fully made up. I will not (come what may) indulge in the tomfoolery of *prayshchit* (purification ceremony). No, not even if I die for it. I have been provoked and have been dragged from my seclusion into public notice. But my enemies will find me a hard nut to crack. I know what your *biradari* (caste) is and if necessary, in self-defence, I will ruthlessly and mercilessly lay bare the tattered fabric of its existence and tear it into the minutest possible shreds. I am only waiting for some foeman worthy of my steel to take the field and will then be ready to break a lance with him ... So long as H and others of his ilk howl and bark I

will pass them by with the most studied indifference and contemptuous silence. . . .

Motilal was excommunicated, but did not give in. Nor did he lose any opportunity for a dig at his self-righteous opponents. 'You may not dine with me without polluting yourself,' he told an orthodox uncle who came to see him, 'but I suppose we could share whisky and soda?' Motilal became the leader of a third group, the most emancipated in his community; it was at first called *Moti Sabha*, but the name was changed at Motilal's instance to *Satya* (Truth) *Sabha*. His defiance helped to put out the dying embers of orthodoxy; large numbers of Kashmiri young men were hence-forth able to travel abroad for education or for pleasure, without incurring the odium or opposition of their community.

This trip to Europe, which was followed by another in the following year, accelerated Motilal's westernization. Thorough-going changes ensued, from knives and forks at the dining table to European governesses for the children. To the new influence may be attributed the adoption of 'Nehru' as a surname. 'M. Nehru Esq.' had obviously a more modern ring than 'Motilal Pandit'.

Growing westernization brought Motilal closer to the British community in Allahabad. Many Englishmen admired this handsome Kashmiri Brahmin, the rising star of Allahabad Bar, who dressed, lived and even looked like an Englishman. They envied the elegant luxury in which he lived; they admired his *bonhomie*; they respected his independence even though it sometimes seemed to verge on defiance. Senior officers of the I.C.S. liked his company and enjoyed his hospitality; one of them, Sir Harcourt Butler, who rose to be a Lieutenant-Governor, claimed in 1920 'a friendship of thirty years' standing'. The relations between Government House and Anand Bhawan were cordial; dinners and teas

were exchanged. Motilal had not turned forty when Sir John Edge, Chief Judge of the Allahabad High Court, offered to propose his name for membership of the exclusively European 'Allahabad Club', and to get the proposal seconded by the Brigadier-General commanding the Allahabad sub-area. Motilal politely declined the offer as he sensed the width of the racial gulf and did not want to risk being 'blackballed' by the newest subaltern from England. Nevertheless, it was a fine gesture from the Chief Justice and indicated the high esteem and even affection in which Motilal was held by those at the apex of the official hierarchy.

Many years later, when Motilal gave up his profession and the luxuries of a lifetime to cast in his lot with Gandhi, he became a symbol of patriotic sacrifice. Nothing strikes the imagination of the Indian masses more forcibly than renunciation: a Buddha or a Gandhi storms his way into their hearts. It is therefore not surprising that legends should have grown round Motilal's opulent past: for example, he was said to have sent his linen for laundering to Paris. These legends, by heightening the contrast in his life before and after the plunge into the struggle for freedom, served to feed an inverted snobbery and to fulfil a psychological need of the millions who had dared to challenge the might of the British Empire. There was thus an understandable tendency to play up Motilal's phase of anglicism. But in fact it had definite limits. In the first place, though he flouted the tyranny of caste, he did not discard that characteristically Indian institution, the joint family. Unlike many a westernized Indian, he did not look down upon his relatives or wash his hands of his social obligations. The debt he owed to his brother Nand Lal he repaid many times over. He brought up his nephews as his own children; to them he always remained the beloved *Bhaiji* (respected brother) on whom they could always lean for advice and support. Secondly, Motilal's wife

was too unsophisticated and deep-rooted in traditional beliefs to be converted into a full-fledged *mem-sahib*. Swarup Rani might tolerate knives and forks, and European governesses in her house, but her attachment to the Hindu scriptures, the *pujas* (worship) and orthodox ritual was unshakeable. She continued to make pilgrimages to Hardwar and Benares, though her husband often laughingly suggested that she was already living in *Prayag*, the holy of holies, and could more usefully visit Japan or America.

Swarup Rani's health suffered a setback after the birth of Jawaharlal in 1889. A second child, a daughter, was born on August 18, 1900. She was named Sarup Kumari; her pet-name Nanni ('the little one') was shortened to 'Nan' by a European governess. There was great rejoicing in 1905 when a son was born on November 14th—by a curious coincidence, the birthday of Jawaharlal. But the rejoicing was short-lived; the infant died when he was hardly a month old. Two years later, in 1907, a daughter was born on November 2nd. She was named Krishna; her nickname Betty was the choice of her European governess, but it sounded like 'Beti' (Hindustani for 'daughter'), and was readily accepted by the family. From time to time Swarup Rani became seriously ill and was a semi-invalid for long periods. Her sister Rajvati, who had been widowed at an early age, came over to Allahabad and thenceforth spent the best part of each year nursing Swarup Rani and keeping house for her.

Rajvati's life was punctuated by a strict routine of worship, fasting and other austerities; her influence, coupled with that of the pious Nandrani, the widow of Nand Lal, constituted a strong religious pocket in Anand Bhawan which Motilal made no effort to dislodge. There was indeed a good-humoured co-existence in Anand Bhawan between the deep religiosity of the women and the light-hearted agnosticism of the men. Rajvati was too orthodox to touch food cooked in

the western style for Motilal. She had her own separate kitchen, where she told the children fascinating tales from the epics as she cooked and served them hot *puris*. On auspicious days, such as *Diwali*, Motilal was present at the *Lakshmi puja*. And he looked forward to the colour, festivity and expense of ceremonies such as that on his son's birthday, when the boy was weighed against bags of grain which were later distributed to the poor.

This easy-going tolerance and lack of humbug exposed Motilal to no little misunderstanding and even misrepresentation. Political opponents found religion a good stick to beat him with : he was denounced as 'denationalized', anti-Hindu and pro-Muslim. Only recently a critic referred to Motilal's son as 'English by education, Muslim by culture and Hindu by an accident of birth'. It is not easy to say whether this verdict is coloured more by ignorance or malice. True, Motilal's wide circle of friends included Muslims, his hospitality made no distinction of race or creed, he employed Muslim *munshis* (clerks) and servants; he was well-versed in Persian literature and fond of Urdu poetry. All this did not, however, add up to 'Muslim culture'. During the two hundred years the Nehrus had been settled at Delhi and Agra, they had imbibed that peculiar Indo-Muslim synthesis in dress and etiquette, art and literature, social customs and even superstitions, which was the product of three centuries of Mughal rule and was most pronounced in northern India. It is a fact that his was not a religious temperament. He was not one of those inquisitive, introspective, selfquestioning spirits who, obsessed by a sense of sin, draw up a nightly balance-sheet of good and evil deeds, or experience an irresistible urge to penetrate the mystery of life. He was too absorbed by the daily struggle here and now to bother about the hereafter. He was a product of that late-Victorian 'free thinking' rationalism, which was learning to dispense with

divine explanations of the working of the universe and to pin its faith on the human intellect and on science to lead mankind along endless vistas of progress. This rationalism prevented Motilal from being swept off his feet by the tides of Hindu revivalism, which rose high at the turn of the century. The doctrines of the Arya Samajists were too dogmatic, of the Vedantists too metaphysical and the Theosophists too ethereal for his logical, practical—and unimaginative mind.

If we must label Motilal, it would be safer to describe him as an agnostic than as an atheist. His initial rebellion was not against the tenets of Hinduism but against the superstitions with which it was encrusted. By taking to western ways, Motilal did not seek merely to imitate the ruling race; he made a bid for freedom from the hidebound society into which he had been born. It was as if, to prevent asphyxiation, he had opened his western window for a breath of fresh air. In this, as in most other things, Motilal was more rebel than conformist. His innate spirit of rebellion was one day to lead him along political paths which neither he nor his British friends could have imagined as they drank each other's health.

CHAPTER FOUR

MOTILAL THE MODERATE

On December 28, 1885, when Motilal was twenty-four and a budding lawyer in Cawnpore, seventy-two Indian gentlemen from various parts of India met in Bombay. For this first meeting of the Indian National Congress, ground had been paved by a number of pioneers in the fields of education, journalism and social reform. It was, however, left to an Englishman to provide an outlet for the incipient nationalism which was still groping for expression. Allan Octavian Hume, the son of the Radical M.P. Joseph Hume, rose to the high position of secretary of a department. In 1882 he retired, after serving the Government of India for thirty-three years in the Covenanted Service. The remaining thirty years of his life were spent in the service of the people of India.

Hume was convinced that though the British had brought peace to India, they had not solved her economic problems, that the officials were perilously out of touch with the people, that the surging tide of intellectual, social and economic discontent needed to be controlled and channelled if it was 'not to ravage and destroy but to fertilize and regenerate'. As they assembled in the Goculdas Tejpal Sanscrit College in their morning coats, well-pressed trousers, top hats and silk turbans, the seventy-two delegates to the first session of the Indian National Congress could scarcely have realized the historic role they were playing.

It was hardly to be expected that the emergence of an all-India political organization could be welcome to the 'guardians' of the British Raj. Their point of view had been expressed often and bluntly enough. In 1853 Lord Ellen-

borough had observed that British policy should avowedly be 'to continue to govern the Indian people with the deliberate intention of holding them in perpetual subjection'. In March 1877, Sir John Strachey, the Finance Member of the Government of India, frankly repudiated the doctrine that it was the duty of his government to think of Indian interests alone. During the Ilbert Bill agitation, Sir Fitzjames Stephen, a former member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, wrote a letter to *The Times* in which he described the Government of India as 'essentially an absolute Government founded not on consent but on conquest'. Even the gentle, scholarly and judicial Henry Beveridge, the father of Lord Beveridge, who confessed that 'India had burnt itself' into him, could write in 1877 that, however wrongfully the British may have got hold of India, for them to 'abandon her now would be to act like a man-stealer who should kidnap a child, and then in a fit of repentance abandon him in a tiger jungle'.

'The merciful dispensation of Providence, which has placed India under the Great British Dominion,'—such expressions were often heard at the early sessions of the Congress. It was, however, not so much sycophancy as the fighting spirit of some of the Congress spokesmen which impressed the authorities in India. At the second Congress held in December 1886, Raja Rampal Singh, a delegate from North Western Provinces, declared that the Arms Act, which denied Indians the right to carry arms, outweighed all the benefits of British rule: 'We cannot be grateful to it for . . . converting a race of soldiers and heroes into a timid flock of quill-driving sheep.' More significant than the professions of loyalty were the demands voiced by the Congress: the expansion and reform of the legislative councils, the right to question the executive and to criticize the budget, a larger share in the superior branches of the administration. These were radical, indeed revolutionary demands.

Lord Dufferin quickly retraced his steps; the benevolent neutrality of his Government towards the Congress turned to a thinly-disguised antagonism. Hume also discovered his miscalculation; the response from his former colleagues of the Civil Service was disappointing; while they were sensitive to criticism, they were impervious to pleas for reform. It was futile, Hume felt, to address petitions and protests to the authorities in Simla. He decided to appeal to public opinion in India and England over the head of the unchanging and unchangeable bureaucracy. In a speech at Allahabad on April 30, 1888, he declared :

‘Our educated men singly, our Press far and wide, our representatives at the National Congress—one and all—have endeavoured to instruct the Government, but the Government like all autocratic governments has refused to be instructed, and it will be for us to instruct the nations, the great English nation in its island home, and the other far greater nation of this vast continent, so that every Indian that breathes upon the sacred soil of our Motherland may become our comrade and coadjutor, our supporter, and if needs be, our soldier, in the great war, that we, like Cobden and his noble band, will wage for justice, for our liberties and rights.’

The fact that Hume’s speech was delivered at Allahabad had a special significance. Allahabad was the capital of the North Western Provinces and the headquarters of their Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Auckland Colvin. Colvin was a liberal administrator, a supporter of legislative reform in homoeopathic doses, but he had been alarmed by the bold lead Hume had recently given to the Congress. In October 1888, Colvin wrote to Hume warning him against unleashing forces which he would not be able to control.

Colvin’s known antipathy to the Congress and Hume’s visit to Allahabad had brought the conflict to Motilal’s door-

step. The Congress session for 1888 was scheduled to meet at Allahabad during Christmas week; it became an occasion for a trial of strength between the British officials and their henchmen on the one hand, and the local Indian intelligentsia on the other. Among the latter were a number of lawyers, veterans like Pandit Ajudhianath and Bishamber Nath, and juniors like Madan Mohan Malaviya. The president of the session was George Yule, an English merchant of Calcutta and a friend of India. An attempt by a group of loyalists led by Raja Shiva Prasad to break up the session proved abortive. The Raja's buffoonery caused a little stir and much amusement and his 'Patriotic Association', set up as a rival body to the Congress, proved still-born.

Motilal had moved to Allahabad only two years before; after the death of his brother he had too many domestic and professional burdens to be able to afford the distractions of politics. But there was much excitement in the town, and the twenty-seven-year-old Motilal was too proud to keep out of the fray. The list of the 1,400 delegates of the Allahabad Congress (1888) includes 'Pandit Motilal, Hindu, Brahmin, Vakil High Court, N.W.P.'. The following year at the Bombay Congress in 1889, Motilal was not only a delegate, but was also elected to the 'Subjects Committee' in the distinguished company of Surendra Nath Banerjea, Gokhale and Madan Mohan Malaviya. Two years later when the Congress met at Nagpur, Motilal was again elected a member of the 'Subjects Committee'. In 1892 when the Congress again met at Allahabad under the presidency of W. C. Bonnerji, Motilal was the secretary of the Reception Committee. A spacious octagonal hall, specially built in the grounds of Lowther Castle to accommodate 3,500 delegates and visitors, 'surpassed in elegance and finish, the best halls in which the Congress had hitherto held its sessions'. Part

of the credit for this grandiose structure could safely be given to the future builder of Anand Bhawan.

During the next decade Motilal's name does not figure in the list of Congress delegates. These were the years when he was forging his way to the top of the Bar, and hardly had the time or the inclination to stray into the by-ways of politics. Nor was the political atmosphere electric enough to evoke a response in him.

In Britain, these were the years of a resurgent imperialism, of Joseph Chamberlain, Rhodes, Jameson—and Curzon. Lord Curzon's regime marked the high watermark of British imperialism in India. Ironically enough, it also marked the beginning of the end. His 'reforms' of the university and the corporation in Calcutta had already awakened misgivings in the western-educated classes, but the partition of Bengal (July 1905) was his crowning blunder. The Bengali *intelligentsia* viewed the project as a calculated attack on their political consciousness and solidarity. They felt, in the words of Surendra Nath Banerjea, 'the uncrowned king of Bengal', that they had been 'insulted, humiliated and tricked'. The atmosphere in Bengal, and indeed in the whole of India, became dangerously explosive. Hundreds of meetings were held; memorials rained upon the Viceroy and the Secretary of State; the nationalist press thundered. On October 16, 1905, the streets of Calcutta resounded with the cries of 'Bande Mataram', as thousands of men, women and children converged on the sacred ghats for a bath, and later vowed to resist the dismemberment of their province and the threat to the integrity of their race.

All was in vain. Curzon belittled the agitation as 'manufactured', and the authorities followed the time-honoured methods of countering the agitation. In April 1906, a conference of the Bengal Provincial Congress at

Barisal was dispersed, its prominent leaders were beaten up and imprisoned; one of their offences was the shouting of 'Bande Mataram'. The pent-up anger and frustration of the people sought new outlets. They lacked the power to shut out British manufactures; but could they not through the discipline of patriotism raise invisible tariff walls? The boycott of British goods and the encouragement of *Swadeshi* (Indian manufactures) became the two pillars of the campaign against the Partition of Bengal. Such was the temper of the people in Bengal when the campaign was at its height that few people dared to purchase foreign cloth except under cover of darkness; guests retired from dinners where foreign sugar or salt was served; a six-year-old girl cried in her delirium that she would not take foreign medicine; and no porters could be found at Faridpore station to carry the luggage of His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor of East Bengal, when he arrived on a tour of inspection.

The partition of Bengal raised the political temperature in India. It drove some hot-headed youths along the perilous paths of political violence and created a new gulf between the educated classes and the British Government. It also widened the cleavage within the Indian National Congress: the tug of war between Moderates and Extremists was to dominate Indian politics for a decade, and to draw Motilal Nehru into the fray.

The Moderate leadership included well-known figures, whose association with the Congress dated from its birth: party managers like Pherozeshah Mehta, prolific publicists like Dinshaw Wacha and spell-binding orators like Surendranath Banerjea. But the ablest exponent of political moderation was Gopal Krishna Gokhale, the disciple of Ranade, the mentor of Gandhi and the idol of Motilal Nehru. Gokhale was once asked if constitutional agitation had ever

helped a subject country to liberate itself. 'It may be,' he replied, 'that the history of the world does not furnish an instance when a subject race has risen by agitation. If so, we shall supply the example for the first time. The history of the world has not yet come to an end.'

From his seat in the Imperial Legislative Council at Calcutta and Simla, Gokhale directed a powerful search-light on the grievances of the Indian people. Why had the pledge of racial equality, implicit in the Charter Act of 1833 and the Royal Proclamation of 1858, not been fulfilled? Why were Indians shut from their legitimate share not only in the 'great' imperial services, but in the officer cadres of the 'Minor Departments' such as the Opium, Salt, Customs and Police? How was it that after a hundred years of British rule four Indian villages out of five were without a school-house, and seven children out of eight grew up in ignorance and darkness? Gokhale made earnest appeals to the Government of India to recognize the changes which were coming over the country. 'The whole of the East,' he declared in his budget speech of 1906, 'is throbbing with a new impulse, vibrating with a new passion...we could not remain outside this influence even if we would, we would not remain if we could.' He invoked a 'nobler imperialism', instead of that 'narrower imperialism', which treated subject peoples 'as mere footstools' for the dominant race. He called for a change of heart in the bureaucracy. Though foreign in personnel, would not the Government of India conduct itself as if it were national in spirit?

Gokhale was voicing the sentiments, the hopes and the illusions of the first generation of Congressmen. These veterans of the Congress were not dispirited by lack of response from the Government. They had read their British history, and knew what struggles had been waged in and outside Parliament for the Corn Laws, the anti-slavery laws,

the factory laws, parliamentary reform, and indeed for every piece of important legislation. They knew that it could not be otherwise with constitutional reforms for India.

This optimism seemed wholly unrealistic to a section of Congressmen; who were learning to question the premises and the programme of the Old Guard. This radical section, of which the inspirer and hero was Bal Gangadhar Tilak, and which came to be known as 'Extremist', regarded as futile all attempts to penetrate the darkness of the bureaucratic mind with luminous speeches; twenty years of petitioning had failed to bring the country visibly nearer self-government. The partition of Bengal was a godsend to the Extremists, because it seemed to demonstrate the incorrigibility of the British bureaucracy in India and the futility of Moderate tactics. It drove scores of young men and women to anarchical societies, into which they were initiated with the *Gita* in one hand and sword in the other. The Extremist leaders knew fully well that political violence was unavailing and indeed suicidal against a better-armed adversary. They, however, advocated vigorous measures to demonstrate the depth of the national feeling on the partition. Boycott of British goods and promotion of *Swadeshi*—Indian manufactures—became two important planks in their campaign against the Government.

A head-on collision between the Moderates and the Extremists seemed imminent at the Benares session in December 1905—the first meeting of the National Congress after the announcement of the partition of Bengal. The excitement was keen enough to draw Motilal, after many years, as a delegate to this session over which Gokhale—his beau ideal in politics—presided. Gokhale's presidential address, despite its restrained and measured tone, was a trenchant criticism of Curzon's policies and a passionate

plea for a new deal for India. An open clash between the Extremists and Moderates was, however, avoided.

Early in 1906, a rare opportunity seemed to offer itself for the opening of a new chapter in Indo-British relations. The turn of the electoral wheel brought the Liberal Party into power in England. The new Secretary of State was John Morley, the student of Burke, the disciple of Mill, the friend and biographer of Gladstone. The heart of nationalist India, as Gokhale put it, hoped and yet trembled as it had never hoped and trembled before. If only Morley would rescind the partition of Bengal, carry through a substantial measure of constitutional reform and with the help of the new Viceroy inaugurate a sympathetic policy, the bitter legacy of Curzon would be obliterated. Unfortunately, Morley did not, perhaps could not, act quickly. He had to wrestle with his own council in London, packed as it was with the quintessence of Anglo-Indian reaction; he had to reckon with the entrenched bureaucracy at Simla and the vocal European commercial interests in Calcutta; he had to repel the attacks of Curzon, Lansdowne and the Conservative Opposition in Parliament, which accused him of weakening in the face of agitation and violence; he had to handle the Radical members in his own party who urged him to go fast and far in meeting Indian aspirations. It was no easy thing, lamented Morley, to keep one's watch in two longitudes at one and the same time. In 1906 Gokhale visited England and had a number of interviews with Morley. He sent word to Tilak not to impugn Morley's sincerity and to have a little more patience 'for the sake of our common country.'

To Tilak the results of this secret and indefatigable diplomacy were not obvious; the partition of Bengal remained and the attitude of the authorities towards political agitation was hardening. Once again as the time for its annual

session approached, the shadow of a split seemed to lengthen over the Indian National Congress. The Extremists suggested the names of Lajpat Rai and Tilak for the presidency. The Old Guard took fright and summoned Dadabhai Naoroji to the rescue. The 'Grand Old Man', now in his eighty-first year, travelled all the way from England to preside over the Calcutta session in December 1906. His presence prevented an open rupture and facilitated a compromise on the controversial issues of *Swadeshi* and boycott. After Dadabhai's departure, the old suspicions and hatreds between the two factions welled up again. The Moderate leaders, and especially Pherozeshah Mehta, who controlled the party machine, came to the conclusion that the time had come to stem the Extremist tide if the Congress organization in India and Morley's work in England were not to be swept away. Within a few weeks of the Calcutta Congress, the Moderate offensive opened. A number of conferences were convened to educate public opinion. Pherozeshah Mehta himself presided over a conference in Bombay. Another conference was held at Rajpur in Central Provinces.

It was against this background that the first Provincial Conference of the United Provinces opened in Allahabad on March 29th with Motilal Nehru in the chair. That Motilal should have found himself in the Moderate camp may seem surprising in the light of later history; in 1907 it seemed natural and inevitable. Moderate politics were the only politics he had known since he attended the early sessions of the Congress. Constitutional methods of agitation fitted in with his legal training and background; able and persistent advocacy was as sure to succeed at the bar of British public opinion as at the bar of the Allahabad High Court. Motilal had boundless admiration for Gokhale. The aura of religious revivalism that overhung Extremist politics

in Bengal and Maharashtra repelled him. He came to respect Tilak, but had little patience with some of the other Extremist leaders, impatient idealists, whose politics seemed to him to have run away with their imagination and whose methods were better suited to the market-place than to the chamber of a legislature, or even of a lawyer. To one who had worked his way up the hard way, it was also an irritation that some of these young firebrands had no recognizable profession—except perhaps that of patriotism.

Motilal's 12,000-word presidential address at the Allahabad Conference followed the familiar Moderate lines. It contained pointed references to the words of wisdom uttered by the Hon'ble Mr. Gokhale, whom Motilal described as 'the apostle of the gospel of moderation'. Motilal acknowledged India's debt to England. She 'has fed us with the best food that her language, her literature, her science, her art and, above all, her free institutions could supply. We had lived and grown on that wholesome food for a century and are fast approaching the age of maturity. We have outgrown the baby garments supplied to us by England.' He reminded his audience that they enjoyed great blessings under the British rule, not the least of which was the right they were exercising at that very moment of assembling in a public meeting to criticize that rule itself. He paid a tribute to the Indian National Congress, 'the great University of National Politics,' which had educated the people of India and secured a modicum of reform from the Government. If the gains had not been more substantial, it was entirely due to the fact that John Bull had not been sufficiently aroused. 'I firmly believe,' declared Motilal 'that he means well—it is not in his nature to mean ill. This is a belief which is not confined to myself alone. It is shared by many of our distinguished countrymen, including past presidents of the Indian National Congress, and will

be readily endorsed by those who have seen and known John Bull at home. It takes him rather long to comprehend the situation, but when he does see things plainly, he does his plain duty, and there is no power on earth—no, not even his kith and kin in this country or elsewhere—that can successfully resist his mighty will.’

On the Extremists, Motilal launched a vigorous onslaught : ‘A new school of thought has lately arisen in India holding extreme political doctrines, and advocating measures of coercion and retaliation to obtain redress for their wrongs.’ The repressive policy of the Government had brought people to the verge of despair ‘which gave birth to that child of adversity, our good friend the Bengal Extremist’.

Motilal ridiculed the Extremists’ talk of extending the boycott from British goods to British institutions. ‘They would have you,’ he told his audience, ‘make the government of the country impossible. They talk of “passive resistance”—that charming expression which means so little and suggests so much.’ He deprecated unconstitutional methods : ‘We are constitutional agitators and the reforms we wish to bring out must come through the medium of constituted authority.’ He held no brief for the administration; nor did he deny its many shortcomings. He was too proud to recommend a policy of ‘mean, cringing, fawning flattery’ of those in power. ‘You have grievances’, he said, ‘and you must like men demand redress. Be brave, unbending, persistent in advocating and carrying out reforms.’

Earlier in his speech, he had deplored the fact that the subversive ideas of the Extremists had found a ready response in ‘the young blood of schools and colleges in the United Provinces’. Little did he know that the contagion had travelled to England where his only son was at school at Harrow.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE ONLY SON

It is not easy to fathom the depth of the emotion which centres on an only son in a Hindu family. 'I knew,' Jawaharlal has written about his childhood days, 'that my mother would condone everything I did, and because of her excessive and indiscriminating love for me I tried to dominate over her a little'. Motilal was an affectionate but not indulgent father, generous but not gentle. Little Jawahar might find himself on his father's knee, if he peeped into the drawing-room in the evening when Motilal and his friends were relaxing, but in the son's earliest memories admiration for the father was mingled with awe. If the house frequently resounded with Motilal's laughter, it also shook visibly when he was provoked into one of his paroxysms of rage. The provocation usually came from the misunderstanding and bickerings inevitable in a joint family, or from a slip on the part of a servant. Hari (Motilal's personal servant), recalls that at a dinner-party, just as the guests were about to take their seats, Motilal, noticing a servant wipe a plate with the end of his sleeve, beat up the poor wretch so violently that the other servants ran for their lives and the guests—embarrassed and hungry—quietly retired. It was only after one of Motilal's old clerks, Munshi Mubarak Ali, had interceded on behalf of the erring servant, that the household, which seemed in a state of suspended animation, hummed again with activity.

Little Jawahar himself was a trembling victim of his father's wrath when he was barely six years old. One day, noticing two fountain-pens lying at his father's table, he

helped himself to one. When the search was being made, he was too much afraid to confess, but his sin found him out and was punished with such a thrashing that ointment had to be applied to the wounds for several days. In that pre-Freudian age, Motilal could hardly have worried about the traumatic possibilities of such incidents.

Motilal was resolved to give his son the best possible education. He himself had studied only Persian and Arabic in old-fashioned *maktabs* (schools) before switching on to the high school at Cawnpore and Muir Central College at Allahabad. He considered this wholly inadequate for his son. In 1896, when Motilal's elder brother, Bansi Dhar, went to Europe, his son Shridhar (who was about the same age as Jawaharlal) was left at Anand Bhawan. Motilal put both the boys in the local St. Mary's Convent school. Six months later, when Shridhar left Allahabad, Jawaharlal was removed from the school: it was decided that henceforth he would receive instruction at home from English tutors. To this decision, Motilal may have been led partly by aristocratic pride, partly by pro-English prejudices and partly by the consciousness that he could afford the best—and the most expensive—education for his children. The decision had more far-reaching consequences than Motilal could have imagined. Solitary tuition at home deepened the loneliness of a boy who had been an only child for eleven years and had little opportunity to play with children of his own age. On the other hand, Jawaharlal escaped the stereotyped courses of study in Indian schools and colleges, which were suitably spaced by examinations and adorned with degrees designed not so much to release the springs of the mind and soul as to open gateways to careers under the government and in the professions.

Jawaharlal was lucky in being spared the strait-jacket

of conventional education. He was luckier still in having, during the year 1902-4, Ferdinand T. Brooks, a gifted young man of mixed Irish and French extraction, as a tutor. Brooks inspired in his pupil a zest for reading and an interest in science. Brooks was a theosophist and had been recommended to Motilal by Mrs. Annie Besant. In his youth Motilal had been drawn to theosophy, into which he was initiated by Madame Blavatsky herself during her visit to India. Theosophy offers a detailed plan of the universe, its origin and nature, its past and future, based not on deductions from verifiable data, but on direct revelation to the chosen few. 'Full proof is possible,' said one of Madame Blavatsky's original converts, 'to those who have full belief.' Incapable of 'full belief', Motilal had quickly outgrown his enthusiasm for the new creed.

For his son, however, the doctrines of theosophy—'reincarnation', 'astral and supernatural bodies', 'auras' and *Karma*—had an irresistible fascination. He attended the theosophists' weekly meetings, which were usually held in his tutor's room in Anand Bhawan. Annie Besant's eloquence swept Jawaharlal off his feet. He felt the 'call' to embrace theosophy and, with becoming gravity, approached his father for permission. Motilal did not object, and indeed seemed to treat the whole thing as a joke. Evidently he saw it as an outburst of juvenile enthusiasm which would soon pass off—which is exactly what happened. Jawaharlal had the thrill of being 'initiated' by Mrs. Annie Besant and of watching the magnificently bearded face of good old Colonel Olcott at a Theosophists' Convention at Benares. But his interest in theosophy departed with his tutor.

From English tutors to an English public school and university must have seemed to Motilal a natural, perhaps a necessary step. On May 13, 1905, he sailed from

Bombay in the s.s. *Macedonia* along with Swarup Rani, Jawaharlal and the four-year-old Sarup (or Nanni as she was called). This was his third trip abroad after an interval of five years.

Luckily, with the help of some English friends, Motilal managed to get his son into Harrow. The school was not to open till end of September, but on the advice of Dr. Wood, the Headmaster, the boy was left in London to learn Latin and prepare for the entrance examination. Meanwhile, on the advice of London doctors, Motilal took his wife for a few weeks' rest and treatment to watering places on the Continent.

The mineral waters of Bad Homburg failed to produce the magical properties ascribed to them, so on August 17th the Nehrus moved on to Bad Ems. The four hours' train journey on the bank of the Rhine was delightful, and the scenery was 'simply perfect'. Surrounded by high hills and standing on both banks of a small river in which motor-boats were plying up and down every few minutes, Bad Ems struck Motilal as 'one of the loveliest little places' he had ever seen. He was in high good humour and arranged a tea-party for the children of local schools on his daughter's fifth birthday. As the grounds of the Hotel D'Angleterre Englishcherhof could not accommodate four hundred children at a time, they were entertained in two batches. The children enjoyed themselves immensely, and before taking their leave sang German songs. Their teachers made neat little speeches in English to which Motilal made a suitable reply. Motilal gave a glowing account of the party in a letter to Jawaharlal :

'Nanni was literally laden with presents, large crowds assembled round the grounds, and Nanni was cheered by them. She shook hands with each guest (poor thing was quite exhausted). Besides the presents brought by the

children, the proprietor of the hotel sent a beautiful birthday cake, the jeweller from whom I bought a pair of earrings for Nanni sent her a magnificent basket of flowers, and several lodgers in the hotel also sent flowers. It was the greatest birthday Nanni has ever had, or perhaps will have in future. She behaved very well indeed, and looked like a little queen in her new dress. I have come to be known at Ems as an Indian prince. Cheap fame purchased for £15 only!

When the time came for Jawaharlal's admission to Harrow the family returned to London. The parting was as hard for them as for him. When Motilal reached his hotel at Marseilles on October 19, 1905, it was almost midnight. Next morning the *Macedonia* was to take him, his wife and daughter back to India. Full of emotion, he could not leave Europe without a farewell letter to his son.

'You must bear in mind,' he wrote, 'that in you we are leaving the dearest treasure we have in this world, and perhaps in other worlds to come. We are suffering the pangs of separation from you simply for your own good. It is not a question of providing for you, as I can do that perhaps in one single year's income. It is a question of making a real man of you, which you are bound to be. It would be extremely selfish—I should say sinful—to keep you with us and leave you a fortune in gold with little or no education.

'I think I can without vanity say that I am the founder of the fortunes of the Nehru family. I look upon you, my dear son, as the man who will build upon the foundations I have laid and have the satisfaction of seeing a noble structure of renown rearing up its head to the skies.

'We leave you in flesh, but will always be with you in spirit. In less than ten months I will again be with

you, and in about two years you will be in a position to pass a few months among your old surroundings at Allahabad. . . I never thought I loved you so much as when I had to part with you, though for a short time only. Perhaps it is due to my weak heart. But my sense of duty to you is as strong as it ever was, and as for the poor weak heart, it is in your keeping. I have not the slightest doubt that you will rise to all my expectations and more. You have enough work to keep you engaged. . . work includes the preservation of health. Be perfect in body and mind and this is the only return we seek for tearing ourselves from you. I could write pages in this strain, but it is close upon 1 o'clock and you really need no sermon from me. I will, therefore, say farewell, mine own darling boy, take every care of yourself. In doing so you will be taking care of your parents.

Your loving, Father.'

On November 4th, Motilal, Swarup Rani and Sarup were back at Allahabad. 'Here we are at last', he wrote to Jawaharlal two days later, 'but somehow or other Anand Bhawan does not appear to be so full of *Anand* (Happiness). There is something wanting, and that something must necessarily be yourself. I dare say we will soon be accustomed to it.' Immediately on his return, he was inundated with briefs. He had expected that it would take some time before his presence in Allahabad would become known throughout the province. But he was 'most agreeably surprised to see a large number of clients eagerly expecting me with long purses. Briefs are flowing in from all directions. . . and I find it difficult to cope with them. . . my list of cases for tomorrow has reached its climax. During the last twenty-four hours, I have been engaged in every first appeal on the list. My absence from the High

Court for any length of time does not make any difference in my practice. I am taken for a magician ! To my mind it is simple enough. I want money. I work for it and I get it. There are many people who want it perhaps more than I do, but they do not work and naturally enough do not get it.'

The formula of success was not so simple as Motilal made it out to be. But of his industry there could be no doubt. On November 9th he got up at four in the morning, worked away at his briefs till eight, saw new clients till nine, was in the court at ten and on his feet throughout the day. He was resolved (he wrote to his son) 'to work as hard as I can for another seven months, after which I will have the pleasure of seeing you and the benefit of another change in Europe'.

CHAPTER SIX

HARROW

'My dear Mr. Nehru,' wrote Dr. Joseph Wood, the Headmaster of Harrow, on November 1, 1905, 'I received your kind letter this morning and hasten to assure you that your dear boy shall be my special care. I have had a long talk with him, discussed the vital question of clothing, and given him my best advice. I have told him that if his present room should prove too cold for him, I will make arrangements to give him another facing south. He looks very well today, and very smart in his cadet corps uniform.' A week later Dr. Wood wrote again : 'You will by this time have arrived in India, but your thoughts will, I doubt not, often travel back to England. I promised you to write now and then and let you hear something. It is now half-term and you will in due course receive the official report. Every master speaks well of your boy, both as to his work and his conduct. He has distinct ability, is already ahead of his form and will doubtless secure promotion next term. I am fully satisfied with him in every way...'

The official report for the half-term was indeed very complimentary to young Nehru. He was top in every subject. His form work and Modern Languages were 'excellent'. In Algebra he was adjudged 'good', in Geometry, 'extremely neat and painstaking'. The tutor's comment on the 'pupil room work' was : 'Excellent, has done some good history papers for me'. The House Master summed up : 'very creditable stand'.

Motilal was delighted to hear that his son was top of his form, and predicted that before long he would be top of the school :

'Did I not tell you, soon after leavign you, that there was a great and brilliant future for you? . . . I find that the Science column is left blank in the report. Perhaps you will take it up next term. As you know, I want you specially to develop a taste for Science and Mathematics. You are no doubt doing all that can be done and nothing will please me more than to have in you the first Senior Wrangler of your year. . .'

Lyrical though Motilal grew over his son's scholastic attainments, he had no intention of turning the boy into a bookworm. He knew only too well that Jawaharlal had had a lonely childhood and would find it hard to come out of his shell. In his first letter (September 30, 1905) to Harrow from London, he had urged his son to 'make friends with your immediate neighbours in the house—occasionally entertain them on holidays and half-holidays—in a word try to be a general favourite as you are bound to be without my telling you'. In his first letter from Allahabad (November 6) he repeated the advice to 'make many friends' and 'patronize the creameries. .to entertain, specially the rowdier element of the school. Never mind the expenses which cannot be very great'. A few days later, after appreciating his son's exploits at the Rifle Club Range and 'sham fights', Motilal wrote that he was surprised that Jawaharlal had not yet found himself 'mixed up in some real fight with somebody or the other'. 'Please do not suppress the information,' he added, 'even if you get the worse of it. It will by no means be discouraging to me to hear about it.'

Motilal had been a keen sportsman in his youth. He asked his son to play as many games as possible, and gave him *carte blanche* to engage a professional coach for any

game. The only game in which Jawaharlal had acquired some proficiency in Allahabad was tennis, but that was not of much use at Harrow. Nevertheless, there is evidence that young Nehru took his sports as seriously as his studies. He frequented the gymnasium and joined the Rifle Club and the Cadet Corps. The paternal pride was, however, tempered by paternal solicitude :

‘I will advise you to play (football) cautiously. Don’t venture beyond your strength. It will be a bad day for us all if you came out of it with broken bones as did the younger of the two brothers in the book entitled *The Brothers*.’

Work and play kept young Jawaharlal fully occupied, but there were moments, specially in the first few months, when he was homesick for Allahabad. His father had ordered a Bombay firm to send regular consignments of mangoes to Harrow, but to Jawaharlal news from India was more important than Indian luxuries. The weekly mail brought him three letters, one each from his father, mother and baby sister. Little Nanni (Sarup), the darling of the family, seemed to be doing very well in the charge of Miss Hooper, the governess whom Motilal had engaged during his visit to England in 1905. A beautiful child, high-spirited, talkative and wilful, she was a universal favourite.

Motilal to his son, December 14, 1905 : ‘They observed the Foundation Day at the Muir College for the first time this year. They held all sorts of sports and Lady Stanley gave away the prizes. I was called upon to subscribe to the fund as ‘one of the richest Muir Collegians’ and had to do so. But I was not able to go and sent Nanni with Miss Hooper. I am told by some barrister friends that Nanni was very much admired by the ladies and gentlemen present. Lady Stanley in particular did not leave her for a minute, and went

on chatting with her all the time...'

February 15, 1906 : 'You would again have disappointed dear little Nanni had it not been for my foresight. The picture postcard, I posted as from you, came in good time and she was well pleased with it. She now wants you to write to her a letter. I am afraid I am not sufficiently advanced in the fine art of forging to pass off on her a letter from me as if it were from you...'

Swarup Rani's health was the subject of anxious comment on both sides of the water. She wrote to Jawaharlal every week, except when she was too ill to do so. Her letters to her son were written in colloquial Hindustani, and overflowed with emotion. On November 14, 1905, she gave birth to a son. Irrepressibly optimistic, Motilal wrote happily to Jawaharlal : 'The little stranger chose your birthday as the most fitting time to come to this world, and I cannot help attaching a significance to this circumstance.' Unhappily the coincidence had no significance. The child, who was named Ratan Lal, died when he was hardly a month old.

In Allahabad life moved along the old grooves. Occasionally there was exciting news. In February 1906, Pandit Sunderlal was appointed the first Indian Vice-Chancellor of Allahabad University. The Vakils' Association arranged a garden party in his honour, to which the Lieutenant-Governor and his wife were invited. 'Poor Sunderlal,' wrote Motilal, 'is taking lessons from me as to how to talk to the ladies.' Early in 1906, the *Magh Mela* drew an endless stream of pilgrims to Allahabad. About a million people had assembled and thousands were pouring in daily, cholera broke out at the river-side. 'Sunday next is one of the greatest bathing days,' Motilal wrote to his son. 'I am not going to see, what my friends call, fun. It is discouraging to me to see my countrymen engage

themselves in stupid things.'

Motilal included in his letters an occasional word of fatherly advice to his son, who was spending the most impressionable years of his life away from home. When Jawaharlal pleaded lack of time for the dumb-bells which his father had sent him, he was advised 'to have the things handy whenever you enter or leave the room. Do just one exercise about seven times. . . you should, of course, do a different exercise each time during the day.' In February 1906, Jawaharlal received a picture postcard of the Hon'ble N. G. Chandavarkar; below the photograph were just two words in Motilal's own handwriting: 'Unassuming simplicity'. A few days later, the rumoured romance of a Kashmiri youth (the son of a friend of the family) in England gave Motilal an opportunity to touch on more delicate issues. 'You must not confuse real love with a passing passion, or a feeling of pleasure in the society of a girl. . . You know all the arguments against Indians marrying English women. . . You must know that I hold you too dear to think of coming between you and real happiness. . . In everything that concerns you, you do not look upon me as your father, but your dearest friend in the world, who would do anything for you to make you happy'.

Motilal took particular care not to sermonize. His advice was tempered with an informality and good humour which were all too rare between fathers and sons in those days; it was almost as if he was already treating his young son as an adult. After discussing the possibilities of coaching for entrance to Cambridge in the context of the crowded routine at Harrow, he concluded a letter in October 1906 :

'So after all I can give you no advice in the matter and must leave you to your own resources. This is an apt illustration of the true principle of life. You may have lov-

ing and willing parents and friends to back you, but it is you, and you alone, who must fight your own battles...'

Jawaharlal had come to Harrow in 1905 when he was nearly sixteen; to complete the school course, he needed to stay on till the autumn of 1908. Adding three years at the university, he would be more than twenty-two by the time he graduated. He would thus have little time to prepare for the competitive examination for the Indian Civil Service. Motilal had broached the subject with the Headmaster.

Motilal to his son, October 27, 1906 : 'I have told Wood that I had to enter you at Trinity College as having regard to your age and the limits imposed by the I.C.S. Regulations, there was no time to lose...'

Dr. Joseph Wood to Motilal, November 11, 1906 : 'I will do what I can to carry out your wishes, though I confess that I think your boy too young to go to Cambridge. He ought to have another year at school to bring out what is best in him.'

Jawaharlal too was ready to leave Harrow for Cambridge. Though he had plunged into the routine of work and play at Harrow, he did not find his surroundings intellectually very stimulating. 'I must confess', he wrote to his father on March 4, 1906, 'I cannot mix properly with English boys. My tastes and inclinations are quite different. Here boys, older than me and in higher forms than me, take great interest in things which appear to me childish... I almost wish sometimes that I had not come to Harrow, but gone straight to the 'varsity. I have no doubt that public schools are excellent things and their training essential to every boy, but I have come here very late to really enjoy the life.'

'I can quite appreciate your inability to enter into the spirit of Harrow life,' replied Motilal on March 29th, 'an

Indian boy is generally more thoughtful than an English boy of the same age. In fact there is early development in India, which Englishmen call precocity. Whatever it is, my own experience tells me, that what we gain in the beginning, we lose at the end. You must have seen many English boys even older than you are looking perfectly blank and stupid, but have you seen any Indian of the same age as Dr. Wood looking half so vivacious and full of life? This is no doubt due to our climate, but there it is. Childhood in England occupies much greater portion of life than it does in India, and so do boyhood and manhood. Old age does not properly begin till a man is three score and odd—an age very seldom reached in India. Big boys in England are, therefore, to be found committing themselves to foolish pranks, which much smaller boys in India would be ashamed of. But this is no reason why they should be despised. They afford you, who can think, an excellent opportunity to study at least one phase of human nature, and thus add to your stock of that particular branch of knowledge called experience. You seem to put very little value on English public-school life, but let me assure you that as soon as you pass on to the 'Varsity, your thoughts will fondly turn to Harrow. And when you have done with the 'Varsity, the happy reminiscences of it will cling to you throughout life.'

A striking example of this precocity of Indian boys was furnished by Jawaharlal's insatiable interest in politics.

CHAPTER SEVEN
THE YOUNG NATIONALIST

Jawaharlal had hardly been two months at Harrow when he asked his father to send him an Indian newspaper, 'not the *Pioneer*'. In December 1905, he was pleasantly surprised to read in *The Times* that the *Swadeshi* movement had spread to Kashmir, where the people were reported to have bought up, by public subscription, all the English sugar and burnt it. 'The movement must be very strong indeed,' he wrote to his father, 'if it reached even the Kashmiris.'

Jawaharlal read the proceedings of the Indian National Congress with particular interest. When his father wrote from Calcutta that the Moderates and the Extremists had been at loggerheads in the 1906 Congress, he was disappointed. 'I am sorry to hear,' he wrote, 'that the Congress was not a success. I am impatiently waiting for your next letter to know the result of the proceedings. I do hope the different parties worked smoothly together, and there were no dissensions among the delegates.'

Such passionate nationalism may seem surprising in an Indian boy of seventeen studying in an English public school, whose home in Allahabad was one of the most anglicized, whose father was an admirer of British ways and British institutions and counted high British dignitaries among his friends. However, we must remember the great gulf which, at the turn of the century, divided the British and the Indian, the rulers and the ruled. Educated Indians had not forgotten the hysteria of the European community during the agitation over the Ilbert Bill, when Lord Ripon

was ridiculed as a 'White Baboo', and a correspondent of the *Englishman* could seriously assert that 'the only people who have any right to India are the British; the so-called Indians have no right whatsoever'. Not only were Indians excluded from responsible posts in the administration of their own country; they received frequent and galling reminders of their inferior status. Some of the most flagrant examples of racial arrogance were seen on the railways. One of Jawaharlal's cousins, the 'strong man' of the Nehru family, was often involved in these 'incidents' and when they were related at home, young Jawaharlal's blood boiled. He was (he wrote later) 'filled with resentment against the alien rulers of my country who misbehaved in this manner, and when an Indian hit back, I was glad'. He 'dreamt of brave deeds, of how sword in hand I would fight for India and help in freeing her'.

Early in 1907 events conspired to push Motilal to the centre of the stage. An open rupture between the Moderates and the Extremists had been averted at the Calcutta Congress (December 1906), but the tension between the two wings of the Congress had not abated. The year opened with a propaganda offensive by the Moderates. In February Gokhale visited Allahabad. Motilal was present, along with other prominent citizens, at the railway station to welcome him. As the distinguished visitor came out, a large and enthusiastic crowd of students, which had been held back outside the station limits, shouted : '*Gokhale ki Jai*', and surrounded Motilal's carriage, in which Gokhale was to drive to the house of his host, Tej Bahadur Sapru. The students unhorsed the carriage and insisted on drawing it. Gokhale pleaded with them; he threatened to go back to Calcutta. But the students were adamant : amidst deafening cries of *Bande Mataram*, they pulled the carriage through the streets of Allahabad. Next day Gokhale

delivered a lecture on 'The Work Before Us'; Motilal, who presided at the meeting, told his son that the lecture was 'a masterpiece of close reasoning and sound commonsense expressed in the best and purest English'. There were two more lectures by Gokhale on 'Swadeshi' and 'A Few Words to Students'. Motilal gave a garden party in Anand Bhawan and invited 'all the leading Indian and European ladies and gentlemen' of Allahabad to meet the distinguished leader of the Congress.

The enthusiasm which the students of Allahabad had displayed during Gokhale's visit was inspired less by his politics than by his personality. Only a few days earlier they had given a thunderous welcome to Tilak. It was obvious that Allahabad and the United Provinces were beginning to be convulsed with the Moderate-Extremist conflict, and Motilal would be drawn into it willy nilly. In January 1907, there was a meeting of Moderate politicians in Anand Bhawan, at which the possibilities of a provincial conference were discussed; it was suggested that Motilal should preside over it. He was not at all eager to plunge into the political arena, and asked for time to consider the suggestion. The news, however, leaked to the press and it became awkward for him to withdraw. 'I have been compelled to accept it [the presidency of provincial conference]', he wrote to his son. 'It is entirely a new line for me and I have very grave doubts of being able to justify the expectations of my friends. What I am particularly afraid of is the student class. They of late have developed a remarkable aptitude for rowdyism, and no sober and serious thinker can expect to secure an uninterrupted hearing from an audience composed of this element. Tilak was here the other day specially to address the students. . . . He succeeded to such an extent that the students of the Muir College (specially those of the Hindu Board-

ing House) have assumed an attitude of open defiance to the more moderate leaders of these provinces. Sunderlal and Malaviya are openly abused. I have so far escaped, but cannot be safe much longer as my views are even more moderate than those of the so-called Moderates. At present the boys declare that they will all be happy to follow my lead, as they think I have given enough proof of my independence and fearless adherence to my own views in matters social, etc. Whether they will think so when they hear my political views is a totally different question. I have, however, courted the storm and must brave it to the best of my ability.'

Jawaharlal did not share these misgivings. He was delighted at the prospect of his father's entry into active politics. 'I am sure,' he wrote (February 19, 1907), 'you will be as successful in the new line as you have been in other fields. You have already kept away from it far too long, but that, I hope, will add a new zest to it.' He urged his father to agree to preside over the conference. 'However you disagree with the details of the Congress programme,' he argued, 'you cannot but agree with its general aim. . . your (presidential) address is certain to be a brilliant one; only I hope it will not be too moderate. Indians are as a rule too much so, and require a little stirring up.' 'You may not agree with the ways of the new Extremist party,' went on young Nehru, 'but I do not think that you are such a slow and steady sort of person as you make yourself out to be.' This was an extraordinarily shrewd judgment of his father's political make-up; but many years were to pass, and much was to happen to father and son and to India, before the truth of this judgment was vindicated.

Motilal's presidential address received the qualified approval of his son :

'You are still very Moderate, but I hardly expected you to become an Extremist. I personally like to see the Government blamed and censured as much as possible. . . As regards John Bull's good faith I have not so much confidence in him as you have. . .'

On July 31, 1907, Jawaharlal left Harrow for Trinity College, Cambridge. From the strait-jacket of a public school, the transition to the university could not but be exhilarating. Young Nehru's nationalist ardour was immediately fanned by the freer climate of the university, the intellectual stimulus of fresh reading, discussions with fellow Indian students and, above all, by the strong breeze of discontent from the Indian sub-continent.

For India 1907 was a critical year. The tensions which had been accumulating since Curzon's viceroyalty had reached bursting point. The Minto-Morley partnership had not been able to assuage Indian feeling. Early in May, the Government of India received a minute from Sir Denzil Ibbetson, the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, on the political situation in his province, which he described 'as exceedingly serious and exceedingly dangerous'. The prosecution of the editor of the *Punjabi*, a nationalist paper, had stirred up feeling in Lahore; tension was mounting in Rawalpindi, Ambala, Ferozepore, Multan and other towns. The most disconcerting feature of the unrest was that it had penetrated to the countryside, strikes of minor revenue officials and cases of withholding land revenue had been reported; carriages and other conveniences had been denied to officers on tour; policemen were being pilloried and adjured to quit the service of an alien Government.

Sir Denzil was convinced that the brain behind the agitation was Lajpat Rai, a leader of the Arya Samaj. Sir Denzil's minute was received in Simla on May 3, 1907. Within ten days, Regulation III of 1818 had been resur-

rected from the dusty state archives and applied to the 'dangerous revolutionary Lajpat Rai', who was taken in a special train (by-passing Calcutta) to Diamond Harbour, where the steamer *Guide* was waiting to carry him to his ultimate destination—Mandalay gaol in Burma.

'I was astounded to read the news from India,' Jawaharlal wrote on May 17th. The same day Motilal included in his weekly letter from Allahabad a trenchant resume of the political situation in which neither the Government nor the Extremists were spared. 'The whole position can be summed up in a very few words. A set of moral cowards has been placed at the head of an administration which is to govern a people who are both moral and physical cowards. The latter kicked up row in the hope of impressing the former with their power and importance. The former got frightened, and, not knowing exactly what to do, laid their hands on the most prominent man in the Punjab simply with the object of overawing the people. This has had the desired effect. . . . The arrest and deportation of Lajpat Rai, unjustifiable and inexcusable as it is, has shown what stuff our countrymen are made of. It is nothing but a storm in a tea-cup, and it is all over now—only we are put back half a century. The forces which were slowly and silently working for the good of the country have received a sudden check.' He cautioned his son not to be unduly alarmed by the news from India: 'It is in the interest of both Government and the people to exaggerate. Each has to justify its action. . . .'

Perhaps these strictures on the Extremists were made for the benefit of his son, whose political consciousness was sharpening fast. 'Do not go near the *Majlis* or the *Native* club or whatever it is called,' Motilal warned Jawaharlal when he went up to Cambridge. The warning was not heeded. 'I went the other day to a meeting of the *Majlis*

here,' came the answer, 'just to see if they were as bad as they were painted. I failed to discover anything reprehensible in it.' And as for the '*Native Club*', Jawaharlal reported that there was one in Cambridge, 'but it was for eating natives'.

A visit to Ireland had put new ideas into the head of the young nationalist. 'Have you heard of the Sinn Fein in Ireland?', he asked his father, 'it is a most interesting movement and resembles very closely the so-called Extremist movement in India. Their policy is not to beg for favours but to wrest them. They do not want to fight England by arms, but "to ignore her, boycott her, and quietly assume the administration of Irish affairs"... Among people, who ought to know, this movement is causing...consternation. They say that if its policy is adopted by the bulk of the country, English rule will be a thing of the past.'

The militant nationalism of his eighteen years old son did not please his father who, in his forty-seventh year, was making a cautious, almost tentative, entry into active politics on the side of a party wedded to slow and ordered progress. As the tension between the two wings of the Congress mounted, Motilal became, along with Malaviya and Sunderlal, the target of the Extremist press in his own province. He retaliated with a hard-hitting article in the *Pioneer* and sent the extract to his son. Jawaharlal's reactions were sharply critical: 'I had till now an idea that you were not so very moderate as you would have me believe. The article almost makes me think that you are 'immoderately Moderate'. I would have said that the article had been written by a person with strong loyalist tendencies if I had not known you better...' Having overshot his mark, Jawaharlal received an immediate reproof. 'You know me and my views well enough,' Motilal wrote (January 10, 1908), 'to understand that I do not approve of opinions

expressed by you, but boys must be boys . . . We are living in very critical times and events are crowding so fast that the present situation cannot last very long . . . It is unnecessary to enter into any discussion on this subject. Within a year or two, there will be no doubt left in the mind of anyone as to the correctness or otherwise of the attitude of the various so-called political parties in India'.

Events had indeed already moved to a dramatic climax at Surat, where the Indian National Congress met for its twenty-third session in December 1907. Motilal had been reluctant to attend the session, he was not well and feared that the long train journey would aggravate his asthma. But his Moderate friends in Allahabad were insistent and Gokhale telegraphed him to come without fail. Motilal returned from Surat with redoubled dislike of Extremist policies and tactics. The reactions of his son (who had not yet received the freezing dose his father had administered in the letter dated January 10th), were just the opposite.

Jawaharlal to Motilal, January 2, 1908 : 'We expected lively things at Surat and our expectations were more than fulfilled. It is of course a great pity that such a split should have occurred. But it was sure to come and the sooner we have it, the better. You will most probably throw all the blame on Tilak and the Extremists. They may have been to blame for it, but the Moderates had certainly a lot to do with it. I do not at all object to Rash Behari Ghose being president, but the manner in which he was declared president in the face of opposition can hardly be defended from any point of view. The Moderates may represent part of the country, but they seem to think, or at any rate try to make others believe, that they are the "natural leaders" and representatives of the whole country. The manner in which some of them try to ignore and belittle all those who differ from them would be annoying, if it

was not ridiculous.' 'I firmly believe', Jawaharlal concluded, 'that there will hardly be any so-called Moderates left in a very few years' time. By the methods they are following at present, they are simply hastening the doom of their party.'

'I am favoured with your views as to the conduct of the Moderates and Extremists at Surat in December last, and feel flattered by the compliment you have paid to the Moderates, knowing of course that your father is one.' 'I am sorry,' Jawaharlal wrote back, 'you don't approve of my opinions, but really I can't help holding them in the present state of affairs . . . anyhow I have not the presumption of imagining that my opinions are infallible.' After this half-hearted apology, he was tempted into a thoughtless witticism : 'The Government must be feeling very pleased with you at your attitude. I wonder if the insulting offer of a *Rai Bahadurship*, or something equivalent, would make you less of a Moderate than you are.'

Motilal was furious, but he did not refer to this subject in his weekly letters. From a number of sources, however, Jawaharlal was left in no doubt of the mood of his father, who even talked of fetching the young hothead home. It was not until April 1908, that the storm blew over, when Jawaharlal begged to be pardoned for an offence, which 'I did not intend to commit', and Motilal closed the controversy with a confession :

'I do not of course approve of your politics and have on certain occasions expressed myself very strongly, as you know, I can, when I wish to. This is, however, neither here nor there. My love for you knows no bounds, and unless there is some very remarkable change in me, I do not see how it can be affected.'

One wonders whether Motilal realized his own responsibility for the political precocity of his son. His letters to Harrow covered the political scene almost as fully as the

domestic. He could, if he had wished, have avoided the subject altogether. Perhaps he thought it was safer to allow the boy let off steam and to channel his interest along prudent lines. Jawaharlal, for his part, had shrewdly discerned a deep vein of defiance in his father beneath the placid surface of Moderate politics. Cautious as he was in advocating political changes, Motilal exhibited a prickly intolerance of bureaucratic or racial arrogance. 'Our Chief Justice is developing a temper,' he wrote in one of his letters. 'I was surprised to see Sunderlal and Chaudhuri submitting to it. Encouraged by their example, he tried to be nasty to me. I paid him back in his own coin, and he is now milk and honey with me.'

The father's avowed displeasure did not moderate the son's radicalism. As we shall see later, Jawaharlal's political consciousness—academic as it was at this time—was further sharpened on the intellectual grindstone of Cambridge. There are signs that from 1908 onwards, Motilal himself began to drift from his Moderate moorings. How far he was influenced by the views of his son it is difficult to say, as his own pride and the compulsion of events were also factors to be reckoned with.

This was the first political clash between father and son, but already it is possible faintly to trace the pattern of the future. Towards the ever-growing radicalism of his son, Motilal's attitude was successively to be one of indignation, opposition, conflict, conversion and, finally, championship.

CHAPTER EIGHT

FATEFUL CHOICE

The fears of Headmaster Wood proved groundless. Jawaharlal was able to cope with the school routine at Harrow and also to pass into Trinity College, Cambridge. Five days before his departure from Harrow, he received his father's congratulations and good wishes.

Motilal to Jawaharlal, July 26, 1907 : I was delighted to hear from your last letter that you had done so well at Part II of the Previous. You have thus closed your career at school with every success and credit that we could possibly expect. Need I tell you how happy and proud I feel ?

'Your admission to Trinity now being assured, you enter on the second stage of your education which promises to be even more successful than the first. It was lucky that you could get into Harrow, one of the premier schools of England, and it is equally lucky that you could get admission into Trinity, a college with a great name and a great history. It would be something for any man to speak about his connections with these great institutions, but in your case it will be the institution who will own you with pride as one of their brightest jewels. I am sure they will profit as much as you will by your connection with them. Go on working, my dear boy, as you have been—good, solid, steady work, interspersed with a fair amount of recreation, amusement and exercise—and you will shine out as one of the leading lights of your time. . . .'

Though Motilal's optimism was racing rather ahead of events, it was certainly backed by the boy's creditable

record in Harrow. But already, it was possible to detect signs of boredom, if not fatigue, in Jawaharlal's approach to the scholastic tournament.

In November, 1906, he was writing :

'I think I can easily come out third, and perhaps second, in the form but of coming out on top I have no hope. . . And even if I come out on top, it would not do me much good. I would get a prize and that would be the end of it. . .'

Motilal wanted his son 'to be the most popular young fellow and the most distinguished graduate of Cambridge', but it is doubtful if these struck Jawaharlal as sufficiently exciting goals. His reading was too catholic and desultory for the latter, his innate reserve and loneliness militated against the former. He was, however, in high good humour and glad to enjoy 'a good deal of freedom, compared to the school', to do what he chose.

Cambridge gave a keener edge to Jawaharlal's political thinking. Unlike Harrow, it had a number of Indian students with whom he could share his boyish hopes and fears for the future of his country. The *Majlis* was a useful forum for Indian students, not only for playing at parliamentary technique, but also for earnest discussion of political issues. Though he could not screw up his courage to speak at these gatherings, Jawaharlal was an interested listener, particularly when an eminent Indian leader addressed them. In November, 1908, Lajpat Rai visited Cambridge and spoke at the *Majlis*. 'Lajpat Rai read a most interesting paper', he wrote to his father, 'he didn't at all like the idea of Indians going into the C.S. (Civil Service) or the Bar. He told me that as I had taken science, I might go in for manufacturing various things.'

'It is curious,' Jawaharlal writes in his autobiography, 'that in spite of my growing extremism in politics, I did

not then view with any strong disfavour the idea of joining the I.C.S.' The choice was not half as obvious in 1908-9 as it appeared a quarter of a century later. Satyendranath Tagore was the first Indian to win his way into the Indian Civil Service in 1863, ten years after entry had been thrown open to a competitive examination. In 1869 four Indians passed in—R. C. Dutt, S. N. Banerjea, B. L. Gupta and S. B. Thakur. On their return to India they were feted and lionized; at Howrah railway station the great Keshub Chander Sen welcomed them in person. Europeans, officials and non-officials whose minds had been baked by the Indian sun, looked askance at these intruders into the higher levels of administration. S. N. Banerjea indeed soon became a victim of race prejudice; he was dismissed from the service for an offence for which a young English officer would have received no more than a 'friendly reproof'.¹

The fact that the entry of these Indians into the I.C.S. was the first dent in the armour of the British Raj was clearly recognized at the time by both sides. In 1877-8, the reduction of the age-limit for the I.C.S. (which handicapped Indian entrants) led to a country-wide agitation in which Banerjea took a prominent part. This agitation heightened the national self-consciousness of the intelligentsia, and helped to crystallize forces which brought into being the Indian National Congress in December, 1885.

In March, 1907, Motilal publicly described the I.C.S. as 'the greatest of the services in the world which has produced some of the most distinguished builders of the British Empire'. A few months later he made his son leave Harrow early to go up to Cambridge so that he might have enough time left after taking his degree to prepare for the I.C.S. examination. As the tempo of nationalist discontent rose

¹ Woodruff, Philip, *The Guardians*, p. 170.

in India during the next two years. Motilal began to suspect that the Civil Service Commissioners were biased against Indian candidates. He voiced this suspicion in a letter to his brother Bansi Dhar when the latter's son Shridhar Nehru failed in his first attempt at the I.C.S. in 1910. There is no doubt, however, that the final decision against Jawaharlal joining the I.C.S. was based not on the merits of the service but on sentimental grounds.

If Jawaharlal joined the I.C.S., his return to India would be delayed by at least two years, and if he became a district officer, he could be posted anywhere in India. These were chilling prospects for his parents, to whom the idea of being parted from their only son for the rest of their lives was intolerable. It was therefore, finally decided that Jawaharlal should follow in his father's footsteps, become a barrister and practise at Allahabad.

Looking back we can see how effectively the I.C.S. absorbed the energy of India's talented young men. One has only to think of the damage done to the Empire by those who left the Service or who just failed to get in—Surendranath Banerjea, Aurobindo Ghose, Subhas Chandra Bose. It is tempting to conjecture what might have happened if Jawaharlal had slid into the comfortable anonymity of a civil servant. With his tremendous capacity for work, his iron constitution and his love of outdoor life, he would doubtless have made an excellent officer in the field; his attention to detail and fluency of expression would have made it equally easy for him to make a mark in the secretariat. His literary ability might have found expression in a handy manual on the 'Land Revenue Problems of Mirzapur District', in a standard work on the 'Flora of Kumaon Hills', in revised gazetteers of the districts in which he served, or even in a fascinating travel book entitled 'Trekking in the Kulu Valley'. And provided he had not ruined his chances

by being too outspoken to a choleric superior, he might have risen to the dizzy heights of the Board of Revenue or the Bench of a High Court, and retired with a C.I.E. to Anand Bhawan, to grow the finest roses and browse on the largest private library in northern India. Not only his own life, but that of his father, mother, wife, daughter and sisters would then have run in less turbulent, albeit obscurer, channels, and the history of India, Asia, Africa—and indeed, the whole world—might have been changed for good or ill. All this was not to be, because he was the only son.

CHAPTER NINE

POLITICS CALLING

'I am sure,' Jawaharlal had written in January, 1907, when Motilal was wondering whether he should agree to preside over the U.P. Provincial Conference, 'you will be as successful in the new line as you have been in other fields.' During the next three years, Motilal was drawn willy nilly into the vortex of public life. Admiration for Gokhale and old associations with his colleagues in the legal profession and in the Congress had led him into the Moderate camp. But though political moderation seemed to him to be founded on the hard realities of the Indian situation, the second thoughts, the half-measures and the compromises of the Moderate party ran counter to a strong vein of pride in his character—pride in his noble ancestry, pride in his country, pride in his own powers—and later, pride in his son. Submission, whether to priestly pretensions or to bureaucratic arrogance, went against the grain. The champions of orthodoxy received no quarter from Motilal when he presided in April, 1909, over the Third United Provinces Social Conference at Agra.

His presidential speech, delivered extempore, was remarkably eloquent and forthright. He attacked the two villains of the piece :

'Let us, therefore, begin at once, and in all earnestness, to remove the two ugliest blots of our social system—caste and *pardah*. These are the two evils which have dragged us down the social scale and made us the laughing-stock of modern civilization.'

The conference had to put up with more plain speaking from its President than it may have bargained for. 'I beseech you,' he said, 'not merely to confine yourself to passing resolutions . . . it is high time that we ceased to be a mere post office and did something practical.' He declared that he himself was an Indian first and a Brahmin afterwards and would not follow any custom or usage of the Brahmins, however sanctified by age or authority, if it came in the way of his duties as a true Indian. He was convinced that the days of orthodoxy were numbered, and recalled 'the tea-pot storms' raised twenty years earlier over foreign travel, which had not prevented 'the more daring souls amongst us to go or send their sons to foreign countries'.

Such candour was unusual at social conferences. The *Indian Social Reformer* described Motilal's speech as 'vigorous'; the *Indian Mirror* called it 'outspoken' and the *Wednesday Review* praised its 'manly tone'.

Among those who wrote to Motilal complimenting him on his excellent speech was Sir J. P. Hewett, the Lieutenant-Governor of the United Provinces. If His Honour derived a secret satisfaction from Motilal's emphasis on social vis-a-vis political reform, he was soon to discover that the enemy of social obscurantism was no friend of political status quo.

Like other leaders of the Moderate party, Motilal had set much store by Secretary of State Morley's desire and ability to inaugurate a new chapter in Indo-British relations. He had telegraphed his congratulations to Morley on the appointment of an Indian—Sir S. P. Sinha—to the Viceroy's Executive Council in the teeth of opposition from influential quarters in India and England. The Secretary of State's stock with the Nehrus was soon to slump. During the spring and summer of 1909, while the reforms were on the anvil in England, the excitement in Allahabad was intense. 'We simply live for half the day in expectation of the *Pioneer*,'

Motilal wrote, 'and spend the other half in discussing the news which it brings.' However, the publication of the reform proposals was something of an anti-climax. The image of Morley as a friend of India fell from its high pedestal and broke in pieces.

Motilal to Jawaharlal, August 30, 1909 : 'Morley's long-promised reforms have at last been published. They are . . . just the opposite of reforms. His advisory Council of Noodles (I beg your pardon...I mean Notables) will be a huge farce, and the enlarged Legislative Council will be no more than a collection of *Ji Hazoors* (yes-men) where the opinion of the Chairman (who is always the Collector of the district) is dittoed by every member. The avowed object of the so-called reforms is to destroy the influence of the educated classes, but the law of the survival of the fittest is too strong even for Morley.'

It was not only the slow and halting measure of constitutional proposals which had shaken Motilal's robust faith in the sincerity of John Bull. He was disgusted at the way some of the British officials and their *protégés* were playing up the differences between Hindus and Muslims; democracy was being made to wither at the roots before it had even sprouted.

Motilal to Jawaharlal, March 25, 1909 : 'An open rupture between the leaders of the two communities is imminent. Nothing short of a miracle can save it. I do not attach much importance to the differences of opinion among the leaders as there has never been much love lost between the two. The masses of both communities have, however, always been good friends and neighbours, and what I dread is the day when the tension of feeling filters down to the lower classes. Nation-building will then be a thing of the past . . . Our Anglo-Indian friends have distinctly scored

in this matter and no amount of Council reforms will repair the mischief.'

In spite of his avowed disappointment with the reforms, Motilal contested a seat in the enlarged provincial council under the 'reformed' constitution and was elected. Endowed with limited and wholly advisory functions, packed with British officials and titled Indian gentry, presided over by the Lieutenant-Governor, the council was an obsequious body. Friendly relations with many of those who sat on the Government benches did not prevent Motilal from assuming from the first the role of a fearless critic of the official policies. He was sworn in on February 7, 1910. On the same day he asked his first question: 'Will the Government be pleased to state whether it contemplates to confer upon graduates of the Allahabad University the right of electing Fellows to the University?' On the following days he asked more questions: 'What were the qualifications of the prosecuting inspectors attached to the courts of the magistrates? How many police reporters sent to political gatherings knew shorthand?' He was often on his feet during question time goading the executive, but it was not until April 25th that he delivered his maiden speech. He criticized the financial arrangements with the Government of India. 'Provincial Governments in matters of finance have been likened by some to shorn sheep left out in the cold, and by others to fat sheep, who having eaten too much, have rolled on their backs and are unable to stand on their legs. But whether as a class they are the one or the other, there is no doubt that this province is treated as the black sheep of the flock under the Government of India.'

He criticized the small allocations for sanitation and education: 'There is so much wanted and so little done in these directions.' He felt that the United Provinces were 'over-policed': 'We spend more on the police than any

other province except Burma, though ours is the most well-behaved of all provinces in India'.¹

Politics have a seductive logic of their own; one thing leads to another. Since March 1907, when he had made his reluctant *début* in the Allahabad Conference, Motilal had been drawn into militant advocacy of social reform, into active political agitation and finally into the arena of the provincial legislature itself. From politics to journalism was a short, almost an inevitable step. The urban intelligentsia which formed Indian public opinion at the time could be reached only by the English press, but the only English daily newspaper in the province was the *Pioneer*—the spokesman of official and non-official European interests. Indian ventures into English journalism had met with little success in the United Provinces. The *Advocate* of Lucknow and the *Indian Opinion* of Allahabad were weekly papers. The launching of the *Leader* in October, 1909, was therefore an important event. The first editor was Madan Mohan Malaviya, who was assisted by Nagendra Nath Gupta and C. Y. Chintamani. Gupta's weekly paper, *Indian Opinion*, (which Jawaharlal had been reading at Harrow) was merged in the *Leader*. Motilal was the first Chairman of the Board of Directors and in this capacity had his first experience of the pleasure and pains of newspaper proprietorship, of which he was to have more than his share ten years later.

The *Leader* soon became a thorn in the side of a bureaucracy which was unaccustomed to criticism. Apropos of an article by Bishan Narayan Dhar, the paper was warned and threatened with prosecution. Motilal and his friends did not take the threat lying down. They consulted two eminent lawyers in England—Sir Edward Carson and Sir Horace

1. U. P. Council Debates, 1910, pp. 165-69.

Avery—who certified the articles as innocent of sedition.¹ This opinion was discreetly conveyed to the authorities. No more was heard of the threatened prosecution. Throughout the crisis Motilal had stood like a rock. ‘So long as a single brick is left on top of another in my house,’ he told St. Nihal Singh, an Indian journalist, ‘I will defend the right of the *Leader* to fight in the cause of freedom.’

St. Nihal Singh, who had just returned from a visit to the United States via Britain and spent ten days in Anand Bhawan in 1910, has left a graphic pen-picture of his host :

‘A tall slender man...A head crowned with coal-black locks, carefully cut and pomaded, surmounted an erect, lithe figure. His forehead was broad and lofty. Time had lightly pencilled a few lines across it. From under arched brows shone two dark eyes aglow with some fire hidden away back in his brain. The expression changed constantly. Now mirth entered them, and they fairly danced with the joy of life. Again, seriousness crept into them, or, they would become suddenly ablaze with righteous indignation. The nose was perfectly modelled. It nevertheless conveyed a suggestion of strength. The lips were thin. A slight curve betokened that they could utter sharp remarks. They were, however, more often parted in a good-natured repartee. The chin was in harmony with the almost Grecian purity of the other features, but gave an impression of combativeness.’

St. Nihal Singh found Motilal’s hospitality overwhelming :

‘The meals were good enough to be placed before royalty. Wine flowed liberally—wine of many kinds. With the dessert were brought boxes of cigars and cigarettes and liqueurs. A fair-sized bar could have been opened with the decanters

1. Natarajan, J., *History of Indian Journalism*, p. 141.

placed in front of us. . . The intellectual feasts served in the evening and on holidays were stimulating. . .'

The twenty-sixth session of the Indian National Congress was held at Allahabad during Christmas week, 1910. Motilal was one of the prominent citizens who had invited the Congress to meet at Allahabad, and Vice-Chairman of the Reception Committee. The president of the session was Sir William Wedderburn, a former Civilian, an associate of Hume, a confidant of Gokhale and an ardent champion of Indian aspirations in and outside the British Parliament. Motilal did not find the proceedings of the Congress very inspiring. The timorous politics of some of his Moderate colleagues, no less than the irrational conservatism of others, had begun to jar upon him. One of his guests, Mrs. Sarla Chaudhrani, who played a notable part in the politics of the Punjab ten years later, had at his instance set a few Vedic verses to music and trained a group of little children, including his elder daughter Sarup, for a performance on the opening day. After the children had practised for a week, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya forbade the recitation on the ground that to chant the Vedic *mantras* in the hearing of non-Hindus was a sacrilege. 'I am so disgusted,' Motilal wrote to his son, 'that I would have chucked the Congress. . . As it is, I take a lukewarm interest in it.'

A notable feature of the Allahabad Congress was the initiative taken by its president, Sir William Wedderburn, in convening a Hindu-Muslim conference, probably the first of a series of conferences on unity, which during the next thirty years produced a harmony of phrases rather than of minds and hearts. It was also at this Congress that a number of Hindu leaders conceived the Hindu Mahasabha, as a communal counter-blast to the All India Muslim League. To Motilal, whose good-humoured agnosticism set him

above the storms of religious passion,¹ the emergence of the new organization was a bad omen.

Motilal to Jawaharlal, January 6, 1911 : 'They [in the Hindu-Muslim Conference] called each other brothers, "cousins". A Committee of eight Hindus and eight Mohammedans with Gokhale as the 17th Member, was nominated by the Aga Khan. It is certain that this committee will never meet or come to no conclusions whatsoever.'

The fires of Muslim communalism were to be stoked for the next thirty years by British reactionaries on the one hand and Hindu partisans on the other.

In one of its resolutions, the Allahabad Congress offered its 'humble homage' and expressed its 'deep and heartfelt joy' at the (expected) visit in 1911 of their Most Gracious Majesties King George and Queen Mary to India.

1. In 1916, Motilal was violently criticized by the Hindu press and politicians in the U.P. for taking an independent line on what was known as the Jehangirabad amendment to the Municipal Bill, which was alleged to be a surrender to Muslims.

CHAPTER TEN

HALCYON DAYS

'I have received the command of His Gracious Majesty King Emperor George V,' Motilal wrote on July 28, 1911, 'to be in attendance at Delhi, a funny way of inviting a gentleman. This is accompanied by a letter saying that the Lieutenant-Governor and Mrs. Porter will be pleased to accommodate me and Mrs. Nehru in their own camp.' A few weeks later, when Motilal received dress regulations 'for English civil officers and English gentlemen', he instructed his son to place orders for a complete outfit in London and to arrange to despatch it by parcel post. For several weeks the court dress bulked large in the correspondence between father and son.

Jawaharlal to Motilal, October 12, 1911 : 'I got your cable day before yesterday and have ordered the court dress and the other clothes you require at Poole's. I suppose you want the ordinary levee dress with sword and everything complete. The shoes for the court dress will be made at Knighton's and the gloves at Travellette's...the hats I am sending ought to fit you. Heath's man has managed to fish your old measures and cast, and he will shape your hats accordingly.'

The Durbar of 1911 was a splendid spectacle. A new city of tents covering twenty square miles and housing nearly a quarter million people was erected in Delhi; it was served by a network of railway stations, post offices, banks and bazars and was illuminated by electric light, which was then a novelty in India.

Motilal, Swarup Rani and their daughters Sarup and Krishna travelled to Delhi in the special train which carried

Lieutenant-Governor Leslie Porter and the official and non-official guests from the United Provinces. The Governor and his wife were very cordial to the Nehrus. 'They have lately become very friendly with us,' Motilal informed his son in January, 1911, 'dinners and teas have been exchanged and Mrs. Porter has been very gushing in her treatment of your mother and myself.' Later in the year when the Nehrus visited Naini Tal, they dined at the Government House. There were about thirty guests, mostly senior British officers. 'It was rather nice of Porter,' Motilal wrote soon afterwards, 'to give us the position of the chief guests of the evening—he taking in your mother to dinner, and I, Mrs. Porter. We spent a very pleasant evening.'

At Delhi, the Nehrus were given every possible consideration and courtesy. They were lodged in the Lieutenant-Governor's special camp; their tent was between those of Sir A. McRobert and an I.C.S. Officer, Mr. Tweedy. There were only two Indian ladies in the United Provinces camp; Swarup Rani was one of them.

Except for the State Dinner, to which no practising lawyer was invited, Motilal and his wife received invitations to all important functions, and were given (he recorded) 'the most prominent places and received special bows from the King and the Queen.' Their eleven years old daughter Sarup (or 'Nan', as she was called in the family) who was one day to represent independent India in the principal capitals of the world, and to preside over the United Nations Assembly, had her first introduction to protocol: 'Nan received special attention from the Queen, who would certainly have spoken to her, had it not been for the stiff formality of the occasion.'

A few days before the investiture which was to be held during the Durbar, rumours were afloat that Motilal would receive a decoration from the King. 'I was rather surprised

to know,' wrote Jawaharlal, 'that people expected you to be knighted. Knighthood in India is more or less an uncommon distinction, in England it is nowadays not worth very much. For the matter of that even a peerage is now hardly a thing to shout about. I do not suppose you are disappointed at the absence of your name from the Honours List.' Motilal hastened to clear up the misunderstanding. 'I do not intend to give you the impression,' he wrote, 'that I cared for a title. It is the last thing in the world that I can expect after the attitude I have adopted towards government officials. It is only men of the type of Leslie Porter, who do not allow their heads to be swollen by high official position, and can appreciate criticism of their official acts that I can pull on with. Such men are scarce.'

Motilal had received invitations to a number of functions at Calcutta, where the King and the Queen were spending Christmas, but he decided to return to Allahabad. 'I have had enough of royalty,' he wrote, 'and have a lot to do at home.' The ten days under canvas in the bracing winter of Delhi turned out to be a perfect holiday. He had left Allahabad with a 'hacking cough and carried a number of medicines to avoid coughing in the presence of the King,' but, fortunately, there had been no occasion to use the medicines. Swarup Rani and the two girls also visibly benefited from the change.

In June, 1910, Jawaharlal graduated from Cambridge with a second class Honours degree. In July, he was urging his father to let him go to Oxford instead of London to study law. This was not because he wanted a degree, but because he wanted to study something besides law. 'Law and Science are all very well in their own way,' he wrote, but no man, however great a lawyer he may be, will or should be excused for his want of knowledge in certain other subjects. I would much rather risk my success at the Bar

than go through life as a mere lawyer with no interest in anything save the technicalities and trivialities of law'. Motilal was rather taken aback by this superior, almost supercilious attitude of his son towards the profession from which he was to earn his bread and butter. 'I am dense enough,' he wrote dryly, 'not to be able to guess what that branch of knowledge is to which the unfortunate lawyer is or should be a stranger. I may, however, tell you that a mere lawyer has not yet been known to succeed in his own profession, and that the lawyers who have succeeded and will succeed have generally something more than mere law to draw upon. Please do not judge the profession by the bad example of your father who is not even well-versed in law.'

In deference to his father's wishes he finally joined the Inner Temple; he expressed a wish also to enrol at the London School of Economics. Motilal did not deny the usefulness of the study of economics, but feared that it might distract Jawaharlal from his legal curriculum. In actual fact London had a softening influence on young Nehru. He found some old friends from Harrow, scions of aristocratic families, developed expensive habits, took rooms in Holland Park in the West End, joined the Queen's Club and tried to 'ape the prosperous and somewhat empty-headed Englishman who is called a man about town'. His requests for funds became more frequent and insistent; sometimes a cable would arrive at Allahabad with just one expressive word: 'Money'. Motilal did not mind the extravagance, but was irritated by his son's hints he might not be able to scrape through the law examination. Jawaharlal's diffidence stemmed partly from his resistance to cramming and partly from what his father had once described as his habit of underrating himself. He did get through the Law Finals, but in the meantime he had incurred his father's wrath. The

immediate provocation was the loss of £ 40 lent by young Nehru to a friend. 'I do not think', Motilal wrote on May 30, 1912, 'there are many fathers in the world who are more indulgent than I am, but however indulgent I may be, I am not the man to stand nonsense. . . . What am I to think when you tell me seriously that there is a chance of your being put back (in the law examination) . . . ? Again, the idea of throwing away £ 40 in the way you did, does not commend itself to me. . . . I am afraid that you have managed to fall in with a set of people, not always desirable for the son of a father of my means. . . . You cannot imagine how grieved I am to say all this but things have come to a pass when I must cry halt'. Motilal went on to ask his son to render an account of the money spent by him during the preceding six months. Jawaharlal replied with a reasoned and dignified explanation, which concluded on a point of principle. The father thus received a foretaste of that peculiar blend of logic and ethics, which many years later was to fascinate his son's admirers as much as it was to exasperate his critics.

Jawaharlal to Motilal, June 21, 1912 : ' . . . Your last letter pained and surprised me very much. I am fully aware of the fact that I have lately spent far too much money and have not given attention to my studies, which I should or might have given. The latter did not have as disastrous results as it might have had, the former I could not very well help after I had decided to live in such expensive surroundings. As for the £ 40, I could not very well refuse. I suffered enough for my folly later on; I was driven to such straits that for the first time in my life I had to pawn my watch. . . .

'You ask me to send you an account of expenditure. . . . May I know if I am supposed to keep you informed of every penny I spend on a bus fare or a stamp? Either you

trust me or you do not. If you do then surely no accounts are necessary. If you do not, then the accounts I send you are not to be relied upon. To me the very idea of furnishing accounts is anathema and suggests my being on ticket-of-leave. I am not desirous of staying in England or any where else under these conditions. I think it will be best for me to return home at once...'

This long explanation had become unnecessary even before it reached Allahabad. After posting his caustic letter of May 30th Motilal admitted that he would 'have given anything in the world to recall the letter and destroy it'. He felt that in a fit of temper he had been unjust to his son and he hastened to make up the quarrel: 'You know as well as anyone else does that, whatever my shortcomings may be, and I know there are many, I cannot be guilty of either love of money or want of love for you.'

The incident was soon forgotten. Motilal was already busy preparing an album of photographs of his son from 'The Cradle to the Bar', and planning another: 'From the Bar to ...' He gave orders for Anand Bhawan to be redecorated and two new rooms to be built on the first floor to make the house 'at least tolerable to one whose head is full of palatial buildings'.

The family reunion took place at Mussoorie in August, 1912. Swarup Rani was beside herself with joy—her sickness had miraculously vanished; Motilal was proud and happy; the twelve-year-old Sarup was agog with excitement, while her baby sister Krishna, who had been born while her brother was in England, wondered what all the fuss was about. A few weeks later, while Motilal was in Allahabad attending to his legal work and the rest of the family was holidaying at Mussoorie, he received a money order for Rs. 500 from a client named Rao Maharaj Singh who wished to engage young Nehru as a counsel. 'The first fee your

father got,' Motilal wrote to his son, 'was Rs. 5 (five) only. You are evidently a hundred times better than your father. I wish I was my son instead of being myself... Your mother will be delighted to hear that you got it as your first fee. So there is the double pleasure for the man who started on Rs. 5 only.'

In December, 1912, within four months of his return from England, Jawaharlal attended the Bankipore Congress with his father. They found the proceedings rather tame. The political temperature had dropped even before the reversal of the partition of Bengal removed the running sore in Indo-British relations. The Congress had not yet recovered from the shock of the Surat split. The Moderates, who were in possession of the party machine, had slammed and bolted the door against the Extremists, whose leader Tilak had been clapped into prison.' Between the caution of the Moderates and the complacency of the authorities, political life was in the doldrums.

To put the events of these years in perspective, it is important to remember that politics were not yet the dominant interest of the Nehru family, but in the nature of a diversion for the week-end or for the dinner table. Domestic and professional activities continued to absorb the energies of both father and son.

The most important event of these years was Jawaharlal's marriage. Curiously enough, the subject had cropped up while he was at Harrow. Motilal did not of course contemplate an early marriage, but he favoured an early engagement on the ground that the choice in the small Kashmiri community was limited, and the couple of eligible girls were likely to be 'booked' by the time Jawaharlal returned to India. The parents were naturally anxious to find an ideal girl for their only son, but they came up against the not uncommon difficulty that beauty and education were

hard to come by in the same person. However, while good looks could not be conferred, it seemed quite possible to cultivate the mind of a good-looking girl. An unusual candour marked the debate between father and son on every aspect of matrimony. 'As for looks,' Jawaharlal wrote from Harrow, 'who can help feeling keen enjoyment at the sight of a beautiful creature? And I think you are quite right in saying that the outer features generally take after the inner person. And yet sometimes this is not the case. Beauty is after all skin deep...' Jawaharlal's pleas that the engagement should await his return to India finally prevailed.

The final choice fell on Kamala Kaul, daughter of Pandit Jawaharmul, a Delhi business man. Kamala, who was born on August 1, 1899, was tall, slim, pretty and healthy. Her home was less westernised than that of the Nehrus, but during her engagement, while she was staying with some of her relations in Allahabad, she was turned over for grooming to the European governesses of her fiance's sisters.

The marriage took place at Delhi on February 8, 1916, the *Vasanta Panchami* day, the Hindu festival which heralds the coming of spring. A special train took Motilal's numerous friends and relatives to Delhi, where the Nehru Wedding Camp was the centre of festivities for a week. On the return to Allahabad, the entertainments continued for several weeks: Indian and European friends of the Nehrus were invited to teas and dinners, badminton and tennis parties, poetical recitations and musical concerts. To Motilal, at the age of fifty-five, the marriage of his only son was a joyous consummation of his life.

That summer, the whole family had a holiday in Kashmir. The holiday over, the family came back to Allahabad. Jawaharlal returned to his desk in Anand Bhawan as his father's junior, to the banal round of the court-room, the Bar Library and the club, relieved by such tepid politics as Allahabad had to offer.

Fortunately for young Nehru, local and national politics soon warmed up to fever heat.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

HOME RULE

'Home Rule.' 1917 opened and closed with these magic words which echoed in a million Indian homes, spelling patriotism and hope to nationalist India, sedition and anarchy to her rulers.

The high-priestess of Home Rule was the London-born sixty-nine-year-old Mrs. Annie Besant, who had adopted India as her home. In January, 1914, she started a weekly paper, the *Commonweal*, from Madras. Six months later she bought a daily paper and renamed it *New India*; the first issue appeared on July 14th, the anniversary of the fall of Bastille. She conceived a movement for India on the lines of Redmond's Home Rule League. 'I am an Indian tom-tom,' she declared, 'waking up all sleepers so that they may wake and work for their motherland.' She tried to 'sell' the idea of her Home Rule League to the Indian National Congress, and to unite that body by the re-admission of Extremists who had been expelled after the 'Surat Split'. The Moderate faction led by Pherozeshah Mehta, which controlled the Congress, was as reluctant to embrace the Extremists as it was to embarrass the Government; it feared that a new organization would divide and weaken the Indian National Congress; it was suspicious of the dynamic old lady, who neither rested herself nor let others rest.

Distruſted and discouraged by the Old Guard of the Congress, which was weakened by the deaths in 1915 of Pherozeshah Mehta and Gokhale, Mrs. Besant decided to

take the plunge alone. In September, 1916, she founded her All India Home Rule League. The Home Rule movement made a swift and strong impression on the country. In April of the same year Tilak had already started a Home Rule League in Poona. There was no rivalry between the two organizations and their leaders worked in harmony.

The Home Rule movement made an instantaneous appeal to Jawaharlal. 'The atmosphere became electric,' he wrote many years later, 'and most of us young men expected big things in the near future.' He joined both Home Rule Leagues, but worked mostly for Mrs. Besant's. Motilal had a high regard for Mrs. Besant, but was too seasoned a lawyer and politician to be swept off his feet. Home Rule was a new slogan but not a new doctrine : self-government had been the avowed aim of the Indian National Congress for the thirty-odd years of its existence and there did not seem to be any need for another organization with the same aim. Not all his son's arguments could persuade Motilal to join Mrs. Besant's movement; these arguments were, however, soon powerfully reinforced from an unexpected quarter.

The Government's reaction to the Home Rule Movement quickly changed from derision to bewilderment, and from bewilderment to alarm. Mrs. Besant's aim—self-government within the British Empire—was modest enough, but her advocacy was militant. She set up a branch of her Home Rule League in England; it published one of her booklets, *India, A Nation*, which the publishers withdrew from circulation under official pressure. 'Obstreperous old harridan'—this is how Geoffrey Dawson, the Editor of *The Times*, referred to Mrs. Besant in a private letter to the

Viceroy.¹ 'A vain old lady influenced by a passionate desire to be a leader of movements'—this was the verdict of Sir Reginald Craddock, the Home Member of the Government of India. There was, however, no denying the fact that her movement was spreading like a prairie fire.

Lord Pentland, Governor of Madras, decided to silence Mrs. Besant by demanding and forfeiting securities from her journals, by imposing restriction on the movements of her lieutenants and finally by issuing orders under the Defence of India Rules (June 16, 1917) for her internment in Ootacamund and Coimbatore along with B. P. Wadia, the Assistant Editor of *New India*, and G. S. Arundale, a popular contributor to that paper. The news of Mrs. Besant's internment came as a bombshell to the Indian intelligentsia. The repercussions were shrewdly summed up in a letter to the Viceroy by Gandhi, who was at this time conscientiously trying to keep out of controversial politics.

M. K. Gandhi to J. L. Maffey, Private Secretary to the Viceroy, July 10, 1917 : '...In my humble opinion the internments are a big blunder. Madras was absolutely calm before then, now it is badly disturbed. India as a whole had not made common cause with Mrs. Besant, but now she is in a fair way towards commanding India's identity with her methods... I myself do not like much in Mrs. Besant's methods. I have not liked the idea of political propaganda being carried on during the war. In my opinion our restraint will have been the best propaganda. And no one could deny Mrs. Besant's great sacrifice and love for India or desire to be strictly constitutional. But the whole country was against me... The Congress was trying to capture

1. *The History of The Times, the 150th Anniversary and Beyond, Part II, p. 841.*

Mrs. Besant. The latter was trying to capture the former. Now they have almost become one...'

During the week following the arrest of Mrs. Besant, events in Allahabad moved with unwonted rapidity. Lord Pentland succeeded where Jawaharlal had failed. On June 20, 1917, the *Leader* announced :

'The Hon'ble Pandit Motilal Nehru, the Hon'ble Dr. Tej Bahadur Sapru, the Hon'ble Munshi Narayan Prasad Asthana, the Hon'ble C. Y. Chintamani...and a number of others have joined the Home Rule League as a protest against the arbitrary action of the Madras Government.'

The same issue of the *Leader* carried a notice of a public meeting of 'the Indian citizens of Allahabad' on June 22nd over which Motilal was to preside. No less than four thousand people gathered in Munshi Ram Prasad's gardens on the evening of June 22nd. 'The country is in the midst of a crisis,' Motilal declared, 'The Government has openly declared a crusade against our national aims... Are we going to succumb to these official frowns?... Let us raise aloft the banner of Home Rule League and 330 million throats voice forth the motto of Home Rule. The bureaucracy is preparing a coffin for Home Rule before its birth... Let us advance with stout hearts saying with the poet: "Come what may, we have launched our boat into the sea."...'

Next day at a meeting of the Allahabad Home Rule League, Motilal was elected president and his son one of the joint secretaries. On June 25th, Motilal cabled to Lloyd George, the British Premier, appealing to 'constitutional England against unconstitutional methods of repression in India'.

The Lieutenant-Governor of the United Provinces at this time was Sir James Meston. His political instincts were better trained than those of his opposite number in Madras and

of his superiors in Simla. In December, 1916, he had paid a courtesy visit to the Indian National Congress when it met in Lucknow. He had discreetly refrained from restricting Mrs. Besant's movements in the United Provinces. Early in July, 1917, he felt greatly perturbed at the sharp edge politics were developing. At first he thought of meeting the leading politicians, but 'in order not to run the risk of too direct a rebuff' he left the task to the Commissioners of Allahabad and Lucknow. The result of the interviews was communicated by him in a confidential letter to the Viceroy :¹

'They both report that there was a disposition to be reasonable, to disavow any intention of stirring up racial animosities. . . . They both, however, felt—and they are quite capable judges of the Indian mind—that there is a genuine suspicion even among the agitators that the Government is contemplating a reactionary policy. . . . I wish it were possible for the Home Government to realize how full of nerves the country is at present, and how eagerly the vast majority of thinking people would welcome any declaration. . . .'

Sir James Meston's letter was dated July 7th. During the succeeding month Motilal, assisted by his son, put new life into the local Home Rule League. 'Capable and energetic' . . . this was how the U.P. Government described² the Allahabad branch of the League in a report to the Government of India. 'The chief political event of the fortnight,' the report continued, 'has been the special meeting of the Provincial Congress at Lucknow on August 10th.' The conference which was presided over by Motilal was

1. Sir James Meston to the Viceroy : July 7, 1917. (N.A.I.).

2. R. Burn, Chief Secretary U. P. Government to Du Boulay, Home Secretary Government of India, August 17, 1917. (N.A.I.).

attended by 548 delegates from the various districts of the U.P., Delhi and Agra. It was a motley crowd, which included Moderates, Extremists, lawyers, doctors, businessmen, *zamindars* and many others who had so far taken little part in politics. The choice of Motilal as president of the conference evoked an editorial comment from the *Leader*:¹

'Pandit Motilal Nehru cannot be dismissed as a prentice hand, an amateur politician, a hot-headed youth or an unquestioning follower of Mrs. Besant. Fifty-six years of age, talented and thoughtful, sober and independent, dignified and manly, he speaks and acts with a proper sense of responsibility, and is admired, trusted and respected by his countrymen. . . . He can be equally trusted even by the bureaucracy to see that any organization or movement, with which he is associated, always conducts itself in the most becoming manner. He has both tact and courage, and is inspired equally by loyalty and patriotism.'

'Studiously moderate,' was the official verdict on Motilal's presidential address. The moderation was apparent more in the language than in the contents of a speech, which was a sharp though closely reasoned indictment of official policies since the outbreak of the war. The bureaucracy, Motilal argued, suffered from the obsession that the root of the trouble lay not in its policies, but in the people themselves. He contrasted the rashness of Lord Pentland with the restraint of Sir James Meston. He drew pointed attention to the freedom of discussion in Britain and the Dominions during the war and deplored the irksome restrictions imposed in India. 'These bureaucratic rulers of ours,' said Motilal, 'are almost completely lacking in imaginative conception, sympathetic understanding and intelligent enterprise. They fail to realize how deeply interested we are in

1. August 13, 1917.

the maintenance and permanence of the British connection in India.' He appealed to 'British Democracy, the sole tribunal appointed by Providence—to decide between us and the bureaucracy'. At this point someone from the audience shouted : 'Question.' The sequel to this interruption may be described in the words of an eye-witness :¹

'Mr. Nehru flared up, violently tapped the table before him, angrily threw over the papers in his hands and hastily put off the spectacles...he challenged the sceptical intruder to come out in the open and disprove his contention. There was complete silence. Pandit Motilal so completely overpowered the assembly, that not a word was breathed in defiance or disagreement while he was on his legs...'

Such was the excitement at this conference that a vocal section advocated the adoption of passive resistance to bring the Government to heel. Motilal steered the proceedings skilfully, holding the conference to its original aim of protesting against the internment of Mrs. Besant and her colleagues and demanding a new political deal for India.

Within ten days of the conference came Montagu's declaration of August 20, 1917 ; 'The policy of His Majesty's Government...is that of increasing association of Indians in every branch of the administration, and gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire.' The declaration came as gentle rain on parched earth. Though trust in Montagu and the British Government was partly offset by suspicions of their agents in India, there was an immediate relaxation in the political atmosphere. On September 17th, Mrs. Besant was released. On October 5th, she arrived at Allahabad. Among those who received her at the railway

1. Malaviya, K. D. *Pandit Motilal Nehru : His Life and Speeches*, p. 10.

station were Tilak, Motilal, Sarojini Naidu and Jawaharlal Nehru. The carriage in which Mrs. Besant was to be driven in the company of Tilak and Motilal to Anand Bhawan, was unhorsed and dragged by a party of young men through the streets of Allahabad, which were decorated with Home Rule flags, bunting and floral arches. Along the route resounded cries of 'Bande Mataram' and '*Besant Mata Ki Jai*' ('victory to Mother Besant'), and flower petals rained from housetops. When the procession reached the office of the Allahabad Home Rule League, Motilal presented an address to Mrs. Besant. 'Two years ago', he said, 'you saw with the clear intuition of genius what the motherland needed. . . You saw the inner hopes and aspirations in the hearts of the dumb, inarticulate millions of the people of this country. . . .'

Mrs. Besant replied briefly. Indian blood, she said, had soaked the soil of Flanders, Gallipoli, Egypt and Mesopotamia. The land that had welcomed Garibaldi, the land that had sheltered Mazzini, could not but give the same welcome to Indians who had fought for the same cause. . . 'We shall join together under a free crown in a free commonwealth of nations in which India shall shine as the sunshine in the East.'

This was Mrs. Besant's glorious hour, even though the glory was to prove evanescent. Lord Pentland had given a tremendous impetus to her swift triumphal progress from Madras to the prison in Nilgiri Hills and finally to the presidency of the Calcutta Congress in December, 1917. In the ensuing dust and heat, Motilal, Tej Bahadur Sapru, C. Y. Chintamani and others—once picturesquely lumped together by the U.P. Government as 'the Brahmin clique of Allahabad'—had taken a fateful step away from Moderate politics. While most of his colleagues were to have second thoughts, for Motilal there was to be no turning back.

CHAPTER TWELVE

REFORMS ON THE ANVIL

On November 27th, 1917, a group of U.P. politicians, including Motilal Nehru, Gokran Nath Misra and Tej Bahadur Sapru, had an interview with Edwin S. Montagu, the Secretary of State for India, at Delhi. Montagu had joined the British Cabinet in July, 1917, made his famous declaration on the political future of India in August and landed in Bombay early in November. That a member of the British Cabinet should, in the midst of a global war, have found it necessary to visit India was an event of great significance, without precedent in the history of the Indian Empire.

Montagu, who joined Lloyd George's cabinet on the understanding that he would go to the India Office, saw clearly that a specious declaration, unless followed up by concrete concessions, would only add fuel to the flames of Indian discontent. Accepting an invitation from the Viceroy, Montagu sailed for India with a small team of advisers. 'My visit to India,' Montagu wrote in his diary soon after setting foot on Indian soil, 'means that we are going to do something... it must be epoch-making or it is a failure.'¹

On November 26, 1917, the Viceroy and the Secretary of State received the deputations of the Congress and the Muslim League. These were, as Montagu said, 'the real giants of the Indian political world', including as they did Mrs. Besant, Hasan Imam, Vesan Pillai, Mazhar-ul-Huq, Jinnah and Gandhi. Next day, they received Madan Mohan

1. Montagu, Edwin S., *An Indian Diary*, p. 8.

Malaviya alone, and then came, to quote again from Montagu's diary, 'four men from the United Provinces. . . . Motilal Nehru has been a great firebrand to Meston, but even he, and more particularly Sapru, and the old Pandit Misra seemed to be quite willing to consider something less than [the Congress-League] scheme. . . if only they were satisfied that we meant business and that they could get responsible government in, say, twenty years. It seems to me . . . it is useless to count upon these lesser men who will be swept off their feet when their leaders start agitation again. . . .'

The inclusion of Motilal among the 'lesser men' may sound incongruous in the light of later history, but in November, 1917, the description was not inappropriate. He had presided over two 'special' political conferences, at Allahabad in 1907, and at Lucknow in 1917; he had been a member of the provincial legislature since 1909; he had been the president of the Social Conference at Agra, of the U.P. Congress, of the *Vakils* Association and of the Home Rule League at Allahabad. But he was only distinguished in his own province and more particularly in his home town of Allahabad. Though he had served as a member of the All India Congress Committee and, since the return of his son from England, had attended all its annual sessions, he was still very much a provincial leader—one of the 'lesser men'. In less than two years, he was to tower head and shoulders above most of the 'giants of Indian politics'.

In his interview with the Viceroy and the Secretary of State, Motilal pleaded for the acceptance of the Congress-League scheme, which had been approved at Lucknow in December, 1916. Designed as a compromise between Indian aspirations and British objections, between Hindu nationalism and Muslim communalism, the Congress-League Scheme included a series of checks and balances. It

sought to place the Secretary of State for India on a par with the Colonial Secretary. The control of defence and foreign affairs was to be reserved to the Imperial Government. Fiscal and administrative autonomy was to be granted to the provinces. The executive councils at the centre as well as in the provinces were to include more Indians, and become responsible to legislatures four-fifths of which were to be elected. The bills passed by the legislatures could be vetoed by the Viceroy or the Governor as the case might be, but if passed again after a year, were to be enforced.

In retrospect, the Congress-League scheme seems modest enough; in 1917 it sounded revolutionary. Even Montagu, sympathetic as he was to Indian aspirations, was unable to see how the control of the executive—and of the purse—could be transferred at one blow to newly-elected and inexperienced legislators. Was India to have no intermediate stage between complete irresponsibility and fully responsible government? Left to himself, Montagu might have taken a long stride forward. But he found in high officials in Delhi and the provincial capitals a deep distrust of the Indian politician. He had also to reckon with the diehards in the Cabinet, Parliament and the press and above all, the powerful Anglo-India lobby in Britain.

The Montagu-Chelmsford Report was published in July, 1918. It was not enthusiastically received in India. Tilak dismissed it as 'entirely unacceptable'. 'Unworthy to be offered by England or to be accepted by India', was the verdict of Mrs. Annie Besant, the president of the Congress. Most of the Moderate leaders, while acknowledging the defects of the report, sprang to Montagu's defence. The cracks in the Congress organization, which had been plastered over at Lucknow barely two years before, reappeared and widened beyond repair.

In the United Provinces, the split between the Moderates and the Extremists was immediately reflected in and outside the legislature. On August 12th Motilal rose from his seat in the provincial council to oppose a resolution welcoming the Montagu-Chelmsford Report. 'To express gratitude for all official acts, whatever their character,' said Motilal, 'is the natural outcome of centuries of bureaucratic rule.' He conceded the good points of the report: its masterly treatment of the subject, its clear reasoning, its sound principles. But before he could express his gratitude, he wanted 'an honest answer to an honest question'. What had they (Montagu and Chelmsford) actually done? Had they redeemed the pledges implicit in the 1917 declaration? Was not the authority of the legislatures hedged by too many 'reservations' and safeguards? It looked as if what was being given with one hand was being taken away with the other. He went on to quote from a speech of Sir James Meston (who as Lieutenant-Governor was presiding over the deliberations of the Council): 'There is a canon of moral strategy that reform must not be afraid of itself.'

On the following day, August 13th, Motilal moved a resolution recommending that all departments, except those of the police, law and justice, should be transferred to ministers responsible to the provincial legislature. The Montagu-Chelmsford Report had vested the control of the army and the navy, foreign affairs and relations with Indian States in the Government of India. 'What catastrophe would befall the Empire,' asked Motilal, 'if popular ministers controlled all provincial departments except those concerned with law and order?' He ridiculed the timid counsels of Chintamani and other Moderate members of the council who had endorsed the official line that Indians must learn to stand before they could walk. 'We cannot

learn to walk,' he said, 'unless you give us the opportunity to exercise the function. If we keep lying down all the time, then goodbye to all benefits of the exercise.'

While the U.P. Council was in session, the Moderate party suffered a serious reverse at a political conference at Lucknow at which Motilal had presided. A number of his Moderate friends—Sapru, Jagat Narayan, Chintamani and others—declared themselves in favour of the Montagu-Chelmsford report. Some of them stayed away from the conference, others found themselves in a hopeless minority.

An important consequence of Motilal's break with his Moderate friends was his incursion into journalism. He had been associated with the *Leader* since its inception in 1909 as an organ of nationalist opinion in the United Provinces. He was indeed the first Chairman of the Board of Directors of 'Newspapers Limited' which owned the *Leader*, and had valiantly resisted early official attempts to muzzle the paper. Chintamani, the young and enthusiastic journalist from Andhra, had within a decade made the *Leader* a power in the land, and himself a power in the *Leader*. In the summer of 1917 Motilal and Chintamani had pulled together over the aftermath of Mrs. Besant's internment. But Montagu's visit at the end of the year proved decisive in Chintamani's final conversion to the idea of constitutional advance by measured stages. At the same time forces at home and in the country were driving Motilal in the opposite direction. He pressed for a more forward editorial policy; but in Chintamani he met a Tartar. At a meeting of the shareholders Chintamani silenced the elder Nehru by producing a majority of proxies. Motilal did not admit defeat, and decided to launch a daily paper of his own; the *Independent* appeared on February 5, 1919.

In the last week of August, 1918, Motilal and his

son were in Bombay for the special session of the Indian National Congress, which had been convened to consider the Montagu-Chelmsford Report. Besides asking for greater powers for ministers in the provinces—somewhat on the lines of Motilal's resolution in the U.P. Council—the Bombay Congress demanded dyarchy at the centre as a first step in the process of making the Government of India fully responsible to the legislature within fifteen years. It was an indication of Motilal's rising stature in national politics that he was called upon to speak on the main resolution at the plenary session. Referring to the charge that there was no parallel in history for the Congress-League scheme, he said: 'I plead guilty to the charge, but I say, are you able to point out a parallel in history for the conditions under which we live and have lived for a hundred and fifty years and more? While we cannot find an exact parallel in history to our case, you are acting in the teeth of the lessons of history.'

The Bombay session was remarkable for the absence of Moderate leaders, who seceded from the Congress and formed a separate body—the National Liberal Federation. The wheel had come full circle: the Moderates, who had expelled the Extremists in 1908, found themselves edged out of the Congress ten years later and suffered a sudden slump in prestige and popularity.

In the autumn of 1918, Motilal's path had diverged from that of his old colleagues, but no one could have foreseen how far and fast he would travel. That was to be decided by the emergence of a new leader on the Indian stage, who was to make in 1919 one of the most spectacular political conquests in history.

Among Gandhi's earliest and most fateful annexations was Allahabad's Anand Bhawan.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

AMRITSAR

The Rowlatt Bills and Gandhi's appearance on the political stage were to exercise a profound influence on the fortunes of the Nehru family. Motilal had followed with interest and admiration the course of Gandhi's valiant struggle on behalf of Indians overseas. In 1913 Jawaharlal had collected funds in Allahabad to assist the Satyagraha struggle in South Africa. Lord Hardinge's strictures on the policies of the South African Government, which nearly led to his dismissal, seemed too mild to Jawaharlal. When one of the young ladies of the family, Uma Nehru, criticized the Viceroy in a public speech and Jawaharlal concurred in her sentiments, Motilal wrote (December 21, 1913): 'Uma's speech is a very creditable one, coming as it does from the heart. The heart, however, is always a fool whoever it belongs to. The only safe guide is the head and I must say there is little of it in the speech... the Viceroy is as helpless in the matter as any of us... it was impossible for him to declare war on the Union Government... [he] went much further than he was justified, having regard to the peculiar relationship which exists between the Indian and the Imperial Governments.'

Jawaharlal had first seen Gandhi at the Bombay Congress in December, 1915; the following year during the Lucknow session they met. Gandhi still had some of the halo of the South African struggle, but his politics seemed a strange mixture. If he avowed loyalty to the British throne and deprecated controversial politics for the duration of the war, he also venerated Tilak, pleaded for the

release of Ali Brothers and Mrs. Besant, led agrarian agitations and conducted himself like a knight-errant of truth, ever ready to take up the 'sword' of Satyagraha against injustice. Jawaharlal was puzzled by Gandhi's politics but captivated by his personality, finding him 'humble and clear-cut and hard as a diamond, pleasant and soft-spoken, but inflexible and terribly earnest. His eyes were mild and deep, yet out of them blazed out a fierce fire...this little man of poor physique had something of steel in him, something rock-like which did not yield to physical powers, however great they might be. And in spite of his unimpressive features, his loin-cloth and bare body, there was a royalty and a kingliness in him which compelled a willing obeisance from others...It was the utter sincerity of the man and his personality that gripped; he gave the impression of tremendous inner reserves of power.'

The Champaran agitation had shown that the quaint little man, seemingly so unworldly, possessed a keen political acumen and a formidable political weapon. The publication of the 'Satyagraha Pledge' made an immediate impact on young Nehru; it filled a void in his soul which the arm-chair politics of Allahabad had failed to do. The vague nationalism of his childhood, nourished by the self-imposed exile at Harrow and Cambridge, at last found a focus.

Motilal was astounded when Jawaharlal told him that he intended to join the Satyagraha Sabha. The elder Nehru held Gandhi in high esteem and was second to none in denouncing the Rowlatt Acts. But the idea of an extra-constitutional agitation seemed to him preposterous. His entire career as a lawyer, legislator and Congressman strongly predisposed him against civil disobedience. In his presidential address to the Allahabad Provincial Conference in 1907, he had ridiculed passive resistance as a

'charming expression which means so little and suggests so much,' and pictured the results of such an agitation. 'I for one tremble to think,' he had said, 'of the condition of things which would prevail if all our Government and 'aided' schools and colleges were to be closed, all municipal and district boards abolished, and the elected element of the legislatures done away with. Where shall we be? The answer is plain enough: nowhere. We cannot even occupy the position we did at the beginning of the British rule, when the institutions, I have just mentioned, did not exist. Remember the price you have been paying upwards of a century for the few blessings that you enjoy. Remember the great price you will have to pay if you throw away these blessings.'

Twelve years later, Motilal's faith in the sincerity of John Bull had visibly declined, but his faith in constitutional methods remained intact: unconstitutional agitation struck him not only as foolish but futile: breaking the law could land a few hundred people in gaol, but hardly affect the apparatus of the administration. 'The heart is a fool, the only safe guide is the head.' It was all very well for Jawaharlal to say that he was going to gaol, but did he realize the repercussions of this step on the health of his ailing mother, the professional fortunes of his old father, the happiness of his young wife and the future of his baby daughter?¹

These misgivings were the more natural in the spring of 1919 when Gandhi was an unknown quantity in Indian politics. The publication of the Satyagraha Pledge had instantly provoked a 'manifesto' of protest signed by a galaxy of senior politicians, who feared that civil disobedience would undermine the stability of the society and

1. Their only child Indira was born on November 19, 1917

the state. There were strong reasons, personal as well as political, for Jawaharlal to pause and think before taking the plunge. What seemed 'a tryst with destiny' in 1947² was, twenty-eight years earlier, a leap in the dark.

Father and son realized that they were at the cross-roads. Night after night, Jawaharlal 'wandered about alone, tortured in mind and trying to grope' his way about, torn by the conflict between his political convictions and family affections, tormented by the feeling that he was not requiting his parents' lifelong love and care. For once, Motilal found that the crisis was too serious to be resolved by the exercise of the paternal prerogative of an angry explosion; secretly he tried sleeping on the floor to get an idea of what his son would have to go through in gaol.

Having failed to wean his son from Satyagraha, Motilal sought Gandhi's intervention. The Mahatma came to Allahabad in the second week of March and advised Jawaharlal to be patient awhile and not to do anything which was likely to upset his father. The domestic crisis was postponed rather than resolved; soon it was overshadowed by a catastrophe which shook the Indian sub-continent, and incidentally brought father and son into political alignment.

'The people of India,' wrote Ramsay MacDonald, after a visit to India in 1909, 'are like the aged Simeon and Anna, the prophetess who watched by the temple for the Messiah. Every year prophets arise who blaze across the religious firmament like a comet, and palpitating hearts are drawn to them.'

2. On midnight of August 14, 1947, Jawaharlal Nehru told the Constituent Assembly : 'Long years ago, we made a tryst with destiny and now the time comes, when we shall redeem our pledge'.

Early in 1919, the Government of India was as slow to recognize the political Messiah as 'the giants of Indian politics' who had rushed to the press with a joint manifesto denouncing Satyagraha. From Allahabad, where he had gone to see Motilal Nehru, Gandhi sent another telegram to the Viceroy on March 12th: 'Even at this eleventh hour, I respectfully ask H.E. and his Government to pause and consider before passing the Rowlatt Bills. Whether justified or not there is no mistaking the strength of public opinion on [these] measures.' The Viceroy and his advisers remained unmoved by Gandhi's appeals. They were convinced that the bills were necessary 'in the public interest'; they dared not risk the loss of face in bowing before Indian opinion; and they tended to underrate (just as a little later they were to exaggerate) the risks of Satyagraha.

Gandhi launched his movement with a day of *hartal* when business was to be suspended and the people were to fast and pray. As a token of anger or mourning, the *hartal* was not unknown in India's villages and towns, but as a national strike in a political campaign it was a novel idea. 'When I suggested the Sunday demonstration and fast', Gandhi confessed later, 'I thought I would be laughed at by most people as a lunatic. But the idea struck the imagination of an angry people.' If the enthusiastic response to his appeal surprised Gandhi, it alarmed the Government. At Delhi, where owing to a misunderstanding the *hartal* was observed on March 30th, the police opened fire to disperse a crowd; Gandhi described the firing as 'a sledge-hammer to crush a fly'. The country-wide demonstrations on April 6th unhinged the authorities.

Gandhi was arrested on the night of April 9th, while he was on his way to Delhi, taken by train to Bombay and set free. He would have again courted arrest by

leaving for Delhi, were it not for the fact that the news of his arrest had provoked serious disturbances in Bombay, Ahmedabad, Nadiad and other places in his own province which was the least expected to forget his fundamental principle of non-violence. He observed a three-day fast to expiate his 'Himalayan miscalculation' in launching a mass-movement without making sure that the people were ready for it. He was as unsparing in his denunciations of mob violence as of official excesses. Though he decided to restrict and finally to suspend civil disobedience, his faith in Satyagraha did not falter. He argued that Satyagraha had not caused violence but only brought it to the surface, curbed it and channelled it along less harmful lines.

The hartal and demonstrations on April 6th against the Rowlatt Act, alarmed the authorities in the Punjab, who read into them not the emergence of the Mahatma, but the recrudescence of the Mutiny. 'The British Government', thundered Sir Michael, 'which has crushed foreign foes and quelled internal rebellion could afford to despise these agitators.' On April 9th, the day of the Rama Naumi, the anniversary of the birth of Lord Rama, Amritsar, the second largest town in the Punjab, witnessed extraordinary scenes of fraternization between Hindus and Muslims. A huge procession formed, but it was peaceful and good-humoured; the brass bands leading it struck up 'God save the King' while marching in front of the (British) Deputy Commissioner. On April 10th, another procession, protesting against the arrest of two local leaders, was fired upon, ran amuck, committed acts of arson and assaulted a few Europeans, including two women. On April 11th, troops under the command of Brigadier-General Dyer were drafted into the city, which was quiet for the next two days.

On the afternoon of April 13th, which happened to be the festival of Baisakhi, a public meeting was held in Jallianwala Bagh, despite a ban on meetings of which many people in the town were not aware. General Dyer marched his troops to the place where the meeting was being held, and ordered firing which lasted for ten minutes until the ammunition was exhausted. The Jallianwala Bagh, with its high-walled enclosure and one narrow entrance, proved a virtual rat-trap for the hundreds of men, women and children who had assembled there. Tragic as this massacre was, worse was to follow. Martial law was declared in Amritsar, Lahore and several districts of the Punjab. O'Dwyer and his civilian and military advisers made themselves believe that by ruthless action they were nipping an incipient rebellion and saving the Punjab for the Empire. Draconian punishments and nameless indignities were indiscriminately meted out to the Indian population by trigger-happy majors and tense magistrates. 'For me', General Dyer had bluntly told the people of Amritsar on the morrow of the Jallianwala Bagh tragedy, 'the battlefield of Amritsar or Flanders is the same.' Blind anger and fear alone could have prompted bombing and machine-gunning of villages from the air, and created under the martial law regime a number of ingenious and indeed fantastic offences. It became for example an offence for two Indians to walk abreast, or for a Hindu and a Muslim to fraternize in public. In Lahore, the capital of the province, college students were made to march sixteen miles in the scorching summer sun to salute the Union Jack, and a marriage party which numbered more than ten was arrested, the bridegroom detained, the priest and the others whipped. Hundreds of persons were rounded up all over the province and tried by summary courts set up under martial law.

Motilal's links with Lahore were close : it was his wife's home town. One of the victims of martial law was his friend Harkishenlal, a prominent Congressman, who was charged with 'waging war against the King'. Motilal applied for permission to defend him, but was not allowed to enter the Punjab. He addressed a long telegram to the Home Member at Simla and sent copies to Montagu and Sinha in London. Montagu, probably goaded by Sinha, reacted quickly, called for the Viceroy's explanation and then, without waiting for it, cabled on June 4th :

'The reasons why advocates from other provinces are being prevented from appearing should please be communicated to me. It is considered by my council that unless special strong reasons exist, the prohibition is improper.'

The Viceroy dutifully defended the action of the local authorities as being 'legal' and 'within the jurisdiction of the Military Administrator', but added that lawyers from outside the province would be admitted after June 11th when martial law was expected to be withdrawn. Not satisfied with this assurance, Montagu telegraphed again on June 9th :

'I presume that there is no probability of proceedings against Harkishenlal and other accused being disposed of before counsel from outside provinces have opportunity of appearing. If there is any doubt, kindly arrange for postponement of proceedings.'

Motilal's strategy in appealing to Montagu and Sinha above the heads of O'Dwyer and Chelmsford was shrewd and successful. He was able not only to save Harkishenlal, but also perhaps to shorten the duration of martial law. But for Montagu's intervention, the Government of India would have let things slide and the Punjab Government would have been in no hurry to restore civil liberties. Unlike many lawyers in Lahore and outside, Motilal

refused to make money out of the distress of the Punjab. He neglected his own practice, visited Lahore at the earliest opportunity and took in hand the appeals of several unfortunate persons who had been condemned by the martial law courts. In London the appeals to the Privy Councils were handled by his own solicitors, Barrow Rogers and Nevill.

Unfortunately, Montagu's sympathy and generosity were not emulated by those who occupied the seats of power in Simla and the provincial capitals. The Government of India brought forward and pushed through the Imperial Legislative Council an Indemnity Bill designed 'to protect' officers who had acted 'in good faith' in the recent disturbances. There were of course precedents for an indemnity bill following a period of martial law, but those were cases in which the *raison d'etre* of martial law was not in question. The enactment of an Indemnity Act, even before the official enquiry committee headed by Lord Hunter began its work, sounded frankly cynical. The 'white-washing bill' formed the subject of a speech by Motilal at a public meeting at Allahabad on September 17, 1919. 'I maintain,' he said, 'that the Government of India is not only the most interested party in this matter... but a very unfair party.. Indeed the way the Government of India has behaved would do little credit even to an ordinary litigant in a court.' The Congress announced that it would boycott the Hunter Committee and conduct a parallel inquiry of its own. 'The public effect of the [Hunter] Inquiry Committee,' Sir Edward Maclagan, the Governor of the Punjab, wrote, 'would be weakened by the absence of the other side.'

However unfortunate the breach on this issue, it had far-reaching consequences. Motilal was appointed a member of the Congress Inquiry Committee; his colleagues

were Gandhi, C. R. Das, M. R. Jayakar and Abbas Tayabji. 'This was the first occasion,' Gandhi recorded many years later, 'on which I came in close personal contact with Motilalji.' A pen-picture of the committee at work has been left by Jayakar: 'Gandhi invariably assumed the role of the stern judge in sifting the chaff from the substance. He took infinite pains to see that what was to be put before the public was the quintessence of truth. The occasions were not infrequent when we differed violently as to what was the truth... Das and I often advocated our view with great insistence; Das often thumped the table with a vigorous gesture, which was his favourite habit when putting forward his point of view. Motilal did the same but with great restraint. Gandhi often stood alone against all this fusillade.' Jayakar adds that Gandhi's weak voice and irresistible logic finally prevailed, and at the end of the day Das would leave the discussion with the remark: 'Damn it all, Gandhi. You are right and we are wrong.'¹

For Motilal, as for other members of the committee, this close association with Gandhi was an instructive experience. The Mahatma's incisive intellect, moral sensitivity, passion for justice, rock-like will, conscious humility, flair for polemics and publicity, were a strange but effective mixture. No longer was it possible to dismiss him as a starry-eyed visionary: it seemed as if his practical sense had been strengthened rather than weakened by the religious cast of his mind. Jawaharlal had already fallen under the Mahatma's spell early in 1919; by the end of the year his father had developed a wholesome respect for Gandhi which was to survive basic temperamental differences as well as the vicissitudes of politics.

An important consequence of Motilal's legal and poli-

1. Jayakar, M. R., *The Story of My Life*, vol. 1, p 322.

tical work for the Punjab was his election as president of the Amritsar Congress. The Amritsar railway station was 'a seething mass of humanity' when he arrived from Lahore on the afternoon of 25th December. He was escorted by a huge procession amidst scenes of great enthusiasm. It was a sign of the times that Motilal and Ajmal Khan (the President of the annual session of the Muslim League which was also meeting in Amritsar) together visited and offered prayers at the Golden Temple, the holy shrine of the Sikhs.

The Amritsar Congress was attended by a galaxy of nationalist leaders, including Tilak and Annie Besant, B. C. Pal and C. R. Das, Malaviya and Gandhi, Srinivasa Sastri and Jinnah. Motilal's presidential speech took three hours. His voice was faint from a recent illness; the audience was in an excitable mood, but he wittily headed off hecklers, who objected to his speaking in English, by 'begging as a Brahmin' for silence to enable his weak voice to reach the ends of the hall. He reminded the Punjabis that they owed it to the delegates from southern India, who had come all the way to Amritsar to sympathize with them in their ordeal, to let him speak in English.

Motilal made a detailed and trenchant analysis of the chain of events in the Punjab—the repressive regime of Sir Michael O'Dwyer, the agitation against the Rowlatt Bills, the beginnings of Satyagraha, the Jallianwala tragedy and the martial law regime. From official sources he cited some revealing statistics : 108 persons had been condemned to death and the sentences of imprisonment added up to the staggering total of 7,371 years. 'The figures for whipping, forfeiture, fines and impositions on villages and towns,' he added, 'are not available.' He accused O'Dwyer of trying to convert the Punjab into 'a kind of Ulster... a bulwark of reaction against all reforms' while Lord

Chelmsford had failed to serve his King and fulfil his trust by 'persistent refusal to listen or to interfere, by his absence from the scene of these happenings'. He bluntly asked whether the British Democracy would tolerate 'this frightfulness' in India and shield its authors. 'That is the acid test of British policy in India. On the answer to that depends the future goodwill of the Indian people.' To Montagu he paid a tribute: he had 'laboured strenuously for us... we must express appreciation of his sincere desire to advance our national aspirations'.

A last-minute addition to Motilal's presidential speech was necessitated by a Royal Proclamation which, besides announcing a political amnesty, had expressed admirable sentiments. 'So far as possible,' King George V had declared, 'any trace of bitterness between my people and those who are responsible for My Government should be obliterated.' The Royal Proclamation came as balm to the assembled leaders at Amritsar. It seemed to confirm their lingering hope that British Democracy would ultimately triumph over British prestige. Motilal expressed his 'humble appreciation' of the Proclamation. Tilak cabled his 'grateful and loyal thanks' to the King Emperor. 'This is a document,' affirmed Gandhi, 'of which the British people have every reason to be proud and with which every Indian ought to be satisfied. The Proclamation has replaced distrust with trust but it remains to be seen whether it would filter down to the civil service.'

As the new year dawned, it seemed as if the trail of bloodshed and bitterness left by 1919 might after all be obliterated.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE PLUNGE

Motilal's chief interest, both as a lawyer and as a politician, lay in the affairs of the Punjab. When the Privy Council rejected the appeals of Bugga and Rattan Chand, two of the martial law accused, he was shocked. 'Whatever part the other appellants might have taken in the disturbances', he wrote to Jawaharlal, 'there can be no shadow of doubt that Bugga and Rattan Chand are as innocent as Indu.¹ Everyone in the Punjab—official and non-official—knows it and yet they are to be hanged! However, this is only one instance out of a million in which injustice is daily perpetrated in this country.'²

The Congress Inquiry Committee published its report in March 1920. Two months later came out the official report—or rather reports, as the European and Indian members of Lord Hunter's Committee divided on racial lines. The conclusions of Lord Hunter and his European colleagues, which were described by Gandhi as 'thinly-disguised whitewash', astounded Motilal. 'My blood is boiling,' he wrote to his son, 'since I read the summaries you have sent. We must hold a special Congress now and raise a veritable hell for the rascals.'

The Anglo-Indian lobby had done its work well—indeed, too well for the future of the Raj. There were uproarious scenes in the House of Commons. Montagu was shouted down for encouraging lawlessness in India and

1. Jawaharlal's daughter who was one year old at this time.

2. Nehru, J. L., *Bunch of Old Letters*, p. 5.

asked to resign. The debate in the House of Lords was no less tense. Sarojini Naidu, who was in England at the time, wrote to Gandhi: 'Our friends revealed their ignorance, our enemies their insolence... Mr. Montagu has proved a broken reed'. Motilal, whom Nevill had been feeding with press cuttings from the British press, was shocked at the way the guilty officials of the Punjab were being shielded and indeed lionized as saviours of the British Empire.

While the political kaleidoscope was shifting fast in the first half of 1920, Motilal was tied down to the small town of Arrah in Bihar by a professional engagement. It was the famous Dumraon case, in which Motilal and a Calcutta barrister, N. N. Sircar, were ranged against C. R. Das, probably the most eminent lawyer in Bengal. The property in dispute was valuable; the stake was high and so were the fees. In eight months Motilal cleared a sum of two lakhs at the rate of Rs. 25,000 a month. But the work was strenuous: the original brief ran to nearly 8,000 pages; the battle of wits continued outside as well as inside the court-room. The atmosphere in Arrah was heavy with intrigue; most of the witnesses and local underlings had been bribed—sometimes by both sides. It was not quite safe to send letters by post, and a private courier service ran regularly between Arrah and Allahabad where Jawaharlal, in the absence of his father, was looking after domestic, legal and political affairs.

The Dumraon case, involving as it did a continual battle of wits with C. R. Das, was no picnic. In February, 1920, while Motilal and his client were in Calcutta for the examination of certain witnesses on commission, Das abruptly closed the plaintiff's case at Arrah, compelled Sircar to open the case for the defence and himself turned up in Calcutta. 'The whole thing was engineered by Das

at Arrah,' Motilal wrote to Jawaharlal, 'you would simply be shocked at the practices to which the big guns of the Calcutta Bar lend themselves.' A few days later Motilal confessed: 'Das is by far the cleverer of the two Calcutta men. I cannot for the life of me understand the tactics he employed today. He has tendered our documents as his evidence'. Motilal spent the night studying the documents in an attempt to understand and checkmate this move.

The case had its exciting moments. On February 27th Motilal noted:

'The turn the case has taken will not admit of my absence from Arrah for an hour. The fate of a large estate depends upon the reading of an Arabic word, and I am the only person on Hariji's¹ side who has pretensions to some smattering in the language. They have examined a formidable witness today... a Persian by birth and the author of many books. He has, however, proved too much and herein lies my chance. I have to work tonight as hard as I can and refresh my memory with the aid of the books...'

Motilal's zest and sense of humour could sustain him under the most trying conditions. 'Mango season is at its height,' he wrote from Arrah, 'but we have had no mango for nearly a week. Only two *safedas*² received today for the four of us. What a tragedy! Are there no *langaras*³ in Allahabad?'

In June while he was at Benares, he visited the Vishwanath temple, 'to see what impression it would convey to my mind at this time of my life'. Unfortunately for him he was immediately recognized, surrounded by a horde of

1. Motilal's client.

2 & 3. Varieties of mangoes.

pandas (priests), made to do *pujas* (worship) and rushed in sweltering heat from one temple to another through the narrow streets of the holy city. 'I felt a sense of relief,' he confessed to his son, 'on returning to the wide road. Total cost of the experience Rs. 110; net gain : abuses of *pandas* and beggars!'

Whatever his preoccupations, Motilal was never too busy to remember his family. He gave detailed instructions for the treatment of Kamala, his daughter-in-law, whose health had already begun to give cause for concern. During his visit to Calcutta, he asked Messrs. Whiteaway Laidlaw to send a perambulator for his two-year-old grand-daughter. 'I am always thinking of Indira,' he wrote on March 8, 1920, 'the very thought of a personification of innocence is soothing. By a very easy slip it justifies idol worship and many other things which modern civilization sets down for senseless superstition. Indira has to be very specially taken care of as she is not at all well.'

While Motilal was at Arrah, Swarup Rani and Kamala fell ill at Allahabad. The doctors advised an immediate change to the hills. Early in May, Jawaharlal arrived in Mussoorie with his mother, wife and sisters, and took rooms in the Savoy Hotel. It so happened that the Afghan envoys, who were negotiating the terms of peace after the brief Anglo-Afghan hostilities of the previous year, were staying in the same hotel. The coincidence led to a crisis.

Jawaharlal to Motilal, May 14th, 1920 : 'Greatness is being thrust on me. I have just had a visit from the Superintendent of Police. He showed me a letter from the Government addressed to him in which he was asked to take a positive undertaking from me to the effect that I would refrain from seeing or having any communication with the Afghan delegates. In case I refused to give this undertaking, an externment order was to be served on me.

I told him that as a matter of fact I had no intention of having anything to do with the Afghan delegation. I had not even seen any of them from a distance so far. He said this was so. He knew it perhaps from various C.I.D. sources. But I told him that on principle I was opposed to giving any undertaking. He was very courteous. . . .’

Jawaharlal refused to give the ‘undertaking’, resisted an impulse to defy the prohibitory order, and left for Allahabad. Motilal was not at all happy at the turn events had taken. Not only had the ailing ladies been left unattended at Mussoorie; there was a real danger that Jawaharlal would defy the ban and land in gaol—a contingency which his father had been dreading and staving off for fifteen months. Motilal therefore decided to address to Governor, Sir Harcourt Butler, whom he knew rather well. He wrote on May 19, 1920 :

‘I need hardly say that I wholly approve of Jawaharlal’s action. . . . His politics and mine are well-known. We have never made any secret of them. We know they are not of the type which finds favour with the Government, and we are prepared to suffer any discomfort which may necessarily flow from them. Young Jawaharlal is known throughout India, and I can confidently say that there is not a man, excepting perhaps in the C.I.D., who will believe that he is capable of carrying on a secret intrigue of the nature apprehended from him. You have yourself had a long talk with him, and knowing as I do the vast and varied knowledge of human nature you possess, I cannot easily believe that you could for a moment doubt the material that he is made of. I am, therefore, inclined to think that one of two alternatives has happened : either the order has been issued by some mistake or inadvertence or under pressure from above.’

The tone of this letter was far removed from the

ingratiating humility to which high British dignitaries were accustomed in letters from Indian correspondents.

Sir Harcourt's reply was at once courteous and evasive: 'I am really very sorry that you and your son, and especially the ladies of your family, should have been inconvenienced by an official act which your son made it a matter of conscience not to fall in with... I hope, whatever views we may hold on public matters... in private life... nothing will interfere with the friendly relations that have existed between us for thirty years'. Motilal appreciated Sir Harcourt's courtesy, but rebutted his arguments. 'I thought', he wrote on June 14th to his son, 'it was necessary to let Master Butler know, that we are not the people to be overawed by him into servility. I have written to him exactly as I felt and knew how you would feel.' The day after this letter was written, the externment order against Jawaharlal was unconditionally revoked. It lasted exactly one month, but was to have far-reaching consequences.

Early in June, while Jawaharlal was at a loose end at Allahabad, he went to meet a few hundred peasants from the adjoining district of Pratapgarh who had marched to Allahabad to draw public attention to their grievances and were encamping on the bank of the Jumna. They begged young Nehru to visit their district and see things for himself. Their villages were off the beaten track of political leaders; many of them could not boast of a post office, a railway station or even a proper road; their problems, even their existence, were beyond the ken of newspapers and politicians. Jawaharlal found his tour of the countryside an exciting as well as instructive experience. Probably for the first time since his return from England, instead of spending the month of June in Kashmir, Mussoorie or Simla, he was tramping the pot-holed, dusty roads of the

Oudh countryside, a wet towel on his head. The peasants were thrilled to have among them the England-trained son of the great Motilal Nehru of Allahabad. As for Jawaharlal, he was 'filled with shame and sorrow, shame at my own easy-going and comfortable life...sorrow at the degradation and overwhelming poverty of India'.¹ He ate with the peasants, lived with them in their mud huts; their affection and gratitude had the miraculous effect of dissipating his own diffidence. Since his university days he had had a horror of speaking in public. His first speech at a meeting in Allahabad in 1916 had won him a compliment² from his father, and a kiss from Tej Bahadur Sapru, but it had not cured him of his stage-fright. In the presence of these wide-eyed, unsophisticated and pathetically ignorant peasants, whose contact with 'educated' people had so far been confined to zamindars, money-lenders and petty officials, Jawaharlal forgot his nervousness. That his Hindustani diction was not of the purest, that he fumbled for words, did not matter to the peasants. Their faces were strangely transfigured, their eyes glistened and their crushing load of misery seemed momentarily to lift, as they crowded round him and listened.

Motilal was glad to hear of his son's adventures in the villages. 'If one or two more visits like this to other parts of the Pratapgarh district can be arranged,' he wrote from Arrah (June 14th), 'there will be some chance for a pure nationalist getting into the Council in spite of the Raja Bahadur of Pratapgarh.' But the brief incursion into the countryside rewarded Jawaharlal with something

1. Nehru, J. L., *Autobiography*, p. 52.

2. Motilal, who was in Kashmir at the time, wrote (June 27, 1916) : 'I was glad to read your speech on the press Act in the *Leader*. Though not very informing it has the rare merit of being free from commonplaces, the besetting sin of all Indian speeches at least in the U. P.'

more valuable than a ticket for the U.P. Council : it shook off his stage-fright, gave him an insight into the 'naked hungry mass' of India, imparted a socio-economic edge to his politics and laid the foundations of his unique mass-appeal.

The Mussoorie episode was no more than an interlude in an exciting drama which was unfolding itself on the wider political stage. The central figure in this drama was Gandhi, whose moves mystified friends as well as opponents, Motilal and C. R. Das, who crossed swords in the court-room during the day and discussed poetry and politics over a bottle of whisky in the evening, were driven to despair by what they regarded as Gandhi's compromising tactics—his eleventh-hour appeals for peace, his exchanges with high British officials, his repeated and futile overtures to the Moderate leaders. In February Gandhi seemed too much of a reluctant rebel; by June he had swung to the other extreme by irrevocably committing himself to 'non-violent non-co-operation'—the boycott of the whole apparatus of government. Without waiting for the verdict of the Congress, which was to meet in a special session at Calcutta in September, he launched his movement on behalf of the Khilafat party, whose frustration had been completed by the publication of the peace terms with Turkey.

In his presidential speech at Amritsar Motilal had described Gandhi 'as the most revered Indian of the day', and 'the great Satyagraha movement as a new force with tremendous potentialities'. Nevertheless, his conversion to non-co-operation was neither quick nor easy. 'As far as I can see,' he wrote on June 16, 1920, 'it is not likely that the Congress as Congress will bind itself to non-co-operation. It is too big an organization for this.' In the same letter he suggested to his son that it was time they selected

for themselves constituencies for the U.P. Council to which elections were due later in the year.

Since 1917 Motilal's politics had been growing progressively more radical. He had broken with his Moderate friends in 1918 over the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms. Yet it was not easy for him to go all the way with Gandhi, to exchange the politics of calculated risks for those of incalculable risks, to make a clean break with the constitutional traditions in which he had been bred, to accept not only new tactics but a new game, the rules of which were being formulated by its author while it was being played. The personal aspect was no less important than the political. It required an effort of will to give up legal practice, to slough off the luxury of a lifetime, to deprive the family of comforts to which it was accustomed. During the Mussoorie episode, Motilal had pleaded with his son not to precipitate a crisis. The consequences, he wrote (June 3, 1920), 'are so obvious both from the public and private point of view that it is hardly necessary to discuss them. It will mean the final break-up of the family and the upsetting of all public, private and professional work. One thing will lead to another, and something is sure to turn up which will compel me to follow you to the gaol or something similar'.

Motilal prided himself on his objectivity, but it is a strange paradox that in the greatest decision of his life he was guided as much by his heart as by his head. It was love of his son that enabled him to take the last crucial step over the precipice. The Punjab tragedy had helped to bring Jawaharlal completely under Gandhi's wing. In 1920, young Nehru was frequently seen with the Mahatma, from whom he received from the first extraordinary consideration and affection. In fact, Motilal was already looking to his son to interpret Gandhi's moves on the political

chequerboard. 'I could not find time to have a quiet talk with Gandhiji as to what he expects us to do,' Motilal wrote to Jawaharlal on June 3rd, 'I hope he has given you some indication before he left this morning.' A few days later, a note in favour of Council-entry, drafted jointly by Motilal and C. R. Das, was carried by Jawaharlal to Gandhi at Bombay.

Jawaharlal seemed determined to go the Gandhi way. In February 1919, and again in May 1920, Motilal had seen his son straining at the leash. Was it not better to push himself forward than to try in vain to pull his son back? Was it not better for father and son to march together—even if it was to prison? The image of a doting father trailing after a dashing son is an absurd over-simplification, but there is no doubt that the conversion of the son made that of the father inevitable, and merely a matter of time.

It is only fair to add that the relationship which had been established between Motilal and Gandhi during their stay in Lahore in the last weeks of 1919 facilitated Motilal's conversion. No two men could have been more different. 'Gandhi was the saint, the stoic, the man of religion, one who went through life rejecting what it offers in the way of sensation and physical pleasure,' and Motilal was 'a bit of an epicure, who accepted life and welcomed and enjoyed its many sensations, and cared little for what may come in the hereafter'.¹ Motilal admired Gandhi; he did not, however, pretend to appreciate all the bees in his bonnet; nor did he rate highly the intelligence of the eccentric fringe in the Mahatma's entourage. On his part, Gandhi had good reasons for according high regard to Motilal, who was eight years his senior, a man of out-

1. Nehru, J. L., *Autobiography*, p. 65.

standing ability, and also young Jawaharlal's father. The links of mutual esteem which were thus forged between Sabarmati and Anand Bhawan were to provide emotional sustenance for the Nehru family. They were also to exercise a profound influence on the course of the Indian freedom movement.

At the Calcutta Congress, Gandhi's plight (as he recalled many years later) was 'pitiable'. He was opposed by an imposing phalanx of veteran leaders including Malaviya, C. R. Das and Lajpat Rai—the President of the Session. The discussions in the 'Subjects Committee' were prolonged; the crucial resolution on a boycott of the legislatures was carried with the narrow majority of seven votes. Motilal, as the official historian of the Congress has recorded,¹ was the only front-rank Congress leader who supported Gandhi at the Calcutta Congress. As a result, he found himself in the three-man sub-committee, including Gandhi and V. J. Patel, which worked out the details of the non-co-operation programme—the boycott of titles and honorary offices, of official functions and *darbars*, of Government-owned or aided schools and colleges, of law courts and legislatures and, above all, of foreign goods.

Immediately after the Calcutta Congress Motilal resigned his membership of the U.P. Council, and announced that he would not seek election to the reformed legislatures. He wound up his legal practice, withdrew his daughter Krishna from the local school which she had recently joined, disposed of his horses, carriages, dogs, treasured crystal and china. Life at Anand Bhawan underwent a sudden metamorphosis. The two cuisines were reduced to one; the cellar was abolished altogether. The army of servants was drastically curtailed. Foreign finery was discarded

1. Sitaramayya, P., *History of the Indian National Congress*,

and cartloads of it were consigned to public bonfires. From the select club of the *élite* of Allahabad, Anand Bhawan turned into a caravanserai frequented by humble-looking folk clad in homespun—party members sojourning in or passing through Allahabad. With political workers flitting in and out at odd hours, the household was in chaos—an ordeal for the women of the family, who found themselves robbed overnight not only of comfort, but of the quiet and privacy to which they were accustomed. Thanks to the ascetic streak which lies just beneath the surface in Hindu womanhood, Swarup Rani, Kamala and the girls quickly adapted themselves to the changes. The process of adjustment was helped by the fact that the author of the metamorphosis was a holy man.

For Motilal the final step had not been easy, but once it was taken, he never looked back. He had spent money with the same facility with which he had earned it. 'No man in his senses,' he wrote on October 27, 1920, to his Arrah client, who was making difficulties about payment of his dues, 'can for a moment doubt the supreme contempt I have always had for money. My whole life is an illustration of this. I have so far been sought by it and have now forcibly closed my doors in its face.'

Before long Motilal was savouring the new simplicity with the same gusto with which he had relished the luxuries he had voluntarily renounced. A glimpse into the changed mode of his life can be had from a letter he wrote to Gandhi in the summer of 1921 from a health-resort: '...The brass cooker...has taken the place of the two kitchens, a solitary servant, not over-intelligent that of the old retinue—three small bags containing rice, *dal* and *masala* that of the mule-loads of provisions...one square meal of rice, *dal*, vegetable, sometimes *khir* [milk and rice cooked together] in the middle of the day, that of break-

fast, lunch and dinner "a l'Anglaise"...The *shikar* has given place to long walks, and rifles and guns to books, magazines and newspapers (the favourite book being Edwin Arnold's *Song Celestial* which is undergoing its third reading): "What a fall, my countrymen!" But, really, I have never enjoyed life better.'

Motilal had laid aside his Savile Row suits, but even the home-spun *khadi* sat well on him. St. Nihal Singh, the journalist, who had enjoyed Motilal's hospitality in 1910 in the heyday of his anglicism, noted the contrast twelve years later.

'A tiny *khaddar* cap of Mahatma Gandhi's invention,' St. Nihal Singh recalled, 'sat saucily I thought upon Panditji's head. He wore no coat nor waistcoat. A long *khaddar* shirt—*kurta* we call it in the Punjab—came down to his knees...his feet were bare, and he had gold-embroidered shoes... The home-spun in which he was clad was coarse. It seemed to add distinction to his handsome face and figure. It certainly did not detract from them. The pure white of the *khaddar* harmonized exceedingly well with his hair and moustaches that had gone grey during the interval between our two meetings. The years had left a few marks upon his face, but he looked robust...'

"A great change, Panditji," I remarked as we sat down in a corner.

"Only in the externals I hope," he replied.

"Mentally, too, I believe," I said.

"Hardly, I have been a rebel all my life. I must have been born a rebel."

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

HIGH TIDE

'What is a matter of grave concern to me,' Motilal wrote to Gandhi soon after the Calcutta Congress, 'is not the giving up of the [legal] practice, but the fate of the *Independent*.' The *Independent* started its career on February 5, 1919, before the passage of the Rowlatt Bills and the Satyagraha movement brought Gandhi to the forefront of national politics. Motilal had thus defined the aims of his newspaper :

'The *Independent* has come into existence, to lay bare the soul of a nation, of a people ripening into nationhood, of communities merging into a people, of individuals growing into a community. How shall it approach its noble works? or better still, how not? Not along the facile line of opportunism, the fatal line of least resistance. . . . But by bringing the fierce light of day to play upon dark spots wherever they exist. By striving to press home the eternal truth that. . . while on the one hand national rights cannot be withheld to be doled out in little bits with a consciousness of high-minded generosity, those rights cannot, on the other hand, thrive in an atmosphere of religious cleavage and racial antagonism. Thus alone can the *Independent* fulfil its mission.'

The first editor of the *Independent* was Syud Hossain, who had served on the *Bombay Chronicle*. Under his editorship the *Independent* made a promising start, but it soon ran into difficulties and became a great drain on Motilal's bank balance just when, owing to his preoccupation with politics, his own income was dwindling. By the

beginning of 1920, the *Independent* had become a headache to Motilal. It had not been easy to find a suitable editor after Syud Hossain's departure. Jawaharlal tried to step into the breach, but he had too many other interests. And even Jawaharlal found that it was easier to dash off an article than to unravel the managerial and financial tangles of the paper.

Motilal tried to sell some shares in 'Nationalist Journals' during his visit to Calcutta, but without success. He could not interest financiers, but was able to enlist the services of Bipin Chandra Pal for regular editorial assignments. Since the partition of Bengal, Pal had been a popular hero in Bengal and indeed in the whole of India; in 1920 his name was still one to conjure with. He was modest in his demands and offered to write four articles a week for sixty rupees. 'He expects payment punctually every Saturday,' Motilal wrote, 'the poor man is really hard up.' In May Pal became editor of the *Independent* at a monthly salary of Rs. 500; one of his sons was appointed a sub-editor at Rs. 100 a month, and another son who was in England was to work as a foreign correspondent for £ 6 a week. At the same time Motilal appointed his energetic nephew Mohan Lal Nehru as the manager of the paper. The hope that these appointments would bolster up the prestige of the *Independent* and bring in fresh capital was not to be realized. B. C. Pal's politics were out of step with those of the Nehrus; his flamboyance outran his discretion, and the guns of the *Independent*, to Motilal's consternation, were turned on Gandhi and the Congress. Within ten days Motilal was asking his son to 'take Bipin Pal in hand. He has run amuck, abusing all nationalists without any distinction. His last attack on Gandhi is about "the limit". The *Ind* appears to be doomed. Whoever comes to it loses his head'. The *Independent* lingered on for another three years. It provided

a useful, perhaps essential, outlet for the political and literary enthusiasms of Jawaharlal, whose articles gladdened his father's heart. 'The leading article in the "Ind", which Nagu brought, was excellent,' Motilal wrote from Arrah (February 26, 1920), 'I smelt Jawahar in every word and sentence.' In spite of all the headaches it gave to the Nehrus, the *Independent* was decidedly a political asset in the autumn of 1920. 'It is the only English daily in India,' Motilal proudly wrote to Gandhi on September 17, 1920, 'to support the full programme of non-co-operation.'

Gandhi's spectacular success in capturing the Congress in 1920 was not the foregone conclusion it might appear in the light of later history. True, he had caught the imagination of the masses, but he had also awakened much doubt and heart-searching in the intelligentsia. The Calcutta Congress, as we have already seen, was no walk-over for him. The Government of India hoped to the last that he would overplay his hand and lose credit with the Congress. 'I think,' Sir William Vincent, the Home Member, wrote on April 26, 1919, 'that a good many people will soon tire of Mr. Gandhi and his vagaries.'¹ And as late as September 4, 1920, the Government of India, pinning its hopes on a split in the Congress, told the provincial government that non-interference towards non-co-operation was the 'wisest policy'.² These hopes were baffled by Gandhi's consummate skill, patience and humility, which enabled him to win over his critics, to change the creed of the Congress, to amend its constitution and to convert it from a 'three-day picnic of the urban gentry' into a broad-based militant organization in touch with the masses.

1. Minute. (N.A.I.)

2. Nanda, B.R., *Mohatma Gandhi* . 220. .

Jawaharlal had virtually given up his practice at the Bar. In the autumn of 1920 Motilal also became a full-time politician. He was elected a member of the Working Committee—the national executive of the Congress—and also one of the three General Secretaries for the year 1921. Since the office of the All India Congress Committee was located in his house at Allahabad, the brunt of the work was inevitably borne by him. He brought to his political work the same singleness of purpose, eye for detail and strong common-sense which had enabled him to dominate the Allahabad Bar.

As General Secretary of the Congress, Motilal clashed with the president for the year, C. Vijiiraghavachariar, the veteran lawyer and Congressman from the South, whose lack of enthusiasm for non-co-operation had been apparent even at the Nagpur Congress over which he had presided, and who raised issues which could have seriously distracted the Congress. Motilal completely by-passed old Vijiiraghavachariar who tearfully complained to Gandhi: 'I deeply, very deeply feel the humiliating position to which the over-enthusiastic Panditji has subjected me under your auspices.'

The non-co-operation movement confirmed Gandhi as the undisputed leader of the Congress and as a great father-figure. 'Gandhism is more than a political movement,' John Clayton, the correspondent of the *Chicago Tribune* wrote on March 1, 1922, after an interview with the Mahatma, 'it is a religion among the followers of this amazing Indian leader. . . He is a master-philosopher of God to these men and women.' Gandhi's asceticism, simplicity and saintliness struck deep chords of Indian humanity. He seemed like a *rishi* [sage] from some ancient epic come to bring about the liberation of India. His parables struck home: his analogies were drawn from Hindu epics. Indian politics became a strange mixture of 'nationalism and

politics and religion and mysticism and fanaticism'. The mists of Khilafat lent a romantic enchantment to non-co-operation in the eyes of the Muslims. The Hindus needed no extraneous impulse to yield their willing allegiance to the Mahatma. Even a hard-headed lawyer like Jayakar could be so profoundly moved as to write to Gandhi in March, 1922 : 'It is a singular fortune of India that, at this crisis, her greatest leader is also the humblest *Bhakta*. That fact must secure for his noble mission the blessing and co-operation of Divine Providence.'¹

Motilal was not swept off his feet by this emotional tide, but he was not entirely unaffected by it. The religious impulse behind the non-co-operation movement appealed to Swarup Rani and Kamala. The girls turned vegetarian; Motilal himself became an abstainer and could even be seen poring over Sir Edwin Arnold's translation of the *Gita*. As for Jawaharlal, he confessed later that he 'came nearer to a religious frame of mind in 1921 than at any other time since my early boyhood'.²

As the morale of non-co-operators went up, that of the authorities went down. A striking example of this new equation was furnished in May, 1921, when Sarup, Motilal's elder daughter, was married to Ranjit Pandit, the handsome barrister-scholar from Rajkot. A number of prominent Congress and Khilafat leaders came to Allahabad to attend the wedding. The concentration of political leaders at Allahabad, coupled with the fact that the date chosen by the priests—May 10th—happened to be the anniversary of the Mutiny, made the imagination of the British officials run riot. Such was the panic into which they worked themselves that there was talk of removing European women and

1. Jayakar, M.R., *The Story of My Life*, vol. I, p. 568.

2. Nehru, J. L., *Autobiography*, p. 73.

children to the Allahabad fort for greater safety. That anyone could have credited Motilal Nehru and Gandhi with designs of a violent uprising appears fantastic today; but it shows the widening gulf between the rulers and the ruled in those critical years 1920-22.

A few days after the wedding Motilal went to Almora in the Kumaon hills to recover from a particularly malignant attack of asthma. At Kathgodam, the rail terminus, while he was in the refreshment room, hundreds of people surrounded his car and decorated it with paper flags and bunting. 'I was so short of breath,' he wrote, 'that I could not say even a few words to them.' At Almora, where he stayed with his nephew Shridhar Nehru of the Indian Civil Service, a crowd collected and insisted that he should speak to them. 'Shridhar looked very uncomfortable,' he wrote, 'each time a lusty *jai* [shout] was sent up by the crowd.'

Henceforth it was to be difficult for Motilal to have any private life : he and his family were to be as much in the public eye as Gandhi himself and as time went on he had his full share of the troubles which are part of public life. He had his first shock in May 1921, when Gandhi went to Simla for a series of interviews with Lord Reading, who had just succeeded Lord Chelmsford as Viceroy. It was given out that Gandhi had agreed to persuade the Khilafat leader Mohamed Ali to withdraw certain passages in a speech which were considered susceptible of incitement to violence. The official communique did less than justice to Gandhi's viewpoint, and the confidential nature of the talks prevented Gandhi from being more explicit. Nevertheless Gandhi did not see any harm in reiterating and emphasizing that non-violence was the sheet-anchor of his movement. This was not how Motilal viewed the episode.

'We have the indisputable fact,' he wrote indignantly to

Gandhi (June 3, 1921) 'that the leader of the N.C.O.¹ movement has been in treaty with the Government of India, and has secured the suspension of the prosecution of Ali Brothers by inducing them to give a public apology and an undertaking... Very serious questions affecting the whole movement arise for consideration. Indeed it seems to me that the whole principle of non-co-operation has been given away.'

The Viceroy, who believed that he had outwitted and out-manoeuvred Gandhi, gleefully wrote to his son :

'If trouble comes between him [Mohamed Ali] and Gandhi, it means that collapse of the bridge over the gulf between Hindu and Muslim.'

It was not the first time that the real significance of Gandhi's action was lost on his adherents as well as his opponents; they failed to see that Satyagraha did not admit of an irrevocable distinction between friend and foe, peace and war, and that even while the battle was in progress, bridgeheads had to be held for the ultimate meeting of minds and hearts.

In 1921, Gandhi was under increasing pressure from within the Congress to tighten the screws on the Government. There was a clamour for a 'mass movement'. Gandhi described civil disobedience as a 'general upheaval on the political plane'; it was the most drastic remedy in the pharmacopoeia of Satyagraha and it could not be lightly applied. He had been perturbed by outbreaks of violence in Ahmedabad and Amritsar in 1919 and in Malabar and Bombay in 1921. The Mahatma's caution was not appreciated by his adherents who were burning to deliver hammer-blows at the bureaucracy. An eye-witness records that when he argued at a meeting of the Congress Working Committee in Novem-

1. Non-co-operation.

ber 1921, that people needed to be trained in hand-spinning before being allowed to offer civil disobedience, 'Pandit Motilal Nehru burst out laughing. Messrs. Kelkar and Patel indulged in loud and angry protests.'

If Gandhi had his reasons for restraint, so had the Government. It was anxious not to precipitate a showdown. It did not want to alienate the Moderates, who venerated Gandhi even though they differed from him. It was reluctant to take any measures which might have the effect of strangling the reforms at birth. It hoped for a split in the Congress; but a split did not come. Indeed, by the time Lord Reading became Viceroy Gandhi had acquired a messianic halo which made it difficult for the Government to balance the risks of his arrest against the dangers of inaction.

In September 1921, the Ali Brothers, the most prominent of the Khilafat leaders, were arrested on a charge of trying to subvert the British Indian army. Soon afterwards forty-five Indian leaders, headed by Gandhi, issued a manifesto affirming that it was 'contrary to the national dignity for any Indian to serve as a civilian and more as a soldier under a system of Government which has brought about India's economic, moral and political degradation'. Both Motilal and Jawaharlal signed the manifesto—the latter in Hindi.

This was an open challenge which the Government would have taken up at once, but for the impending visit of the Prince of Wales in November 1921.² Nevertheless, there were signs of a stiffening of official policy towards non-cooperation.

1. Krishandas, *Seven Months with Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. I, p. 410.

2. For further details, see the author's *Mahatma Gandhi*, pp. 222-28.

'It is essential,' the Viceroy cabled to the Secretary of State on November 24, 1921, 'to take action on more drastic and comprehensive scale... Local Governments are being assured by us of our full support should police or military be compelled to fire... We are informing them that they should not hesitate to prosecute... any person, however prominent, whose arrest and prosecution they consider, is required for maintenance of law and respect of authority...'¹.

December opened with the arrests of a number of prominent leaders. Lajpat Rai was arrested in the Punjab. On December 5th, a number of leading non-co-operators were rounded up in Allahabad. On the afternoon of December 6th, while M. S. Godbole, the office secretary of the All India Congress Committee, was in Anand Bhawan showing some papers to Motilal, a servant announced the arrival of a police officer. What followed may best be described in Godbole's words.

Godbole to Gandhi, December 7, 1921 : 'Panditji... calmly asked him [the police officer] to be introduced... He saluted Panditji in his right royal U.P. fashion, shouting courteously : "Adabaraj"² and the salute was returned in the same manner by Panditji. After a formal greeting, he presented a search warrant... Panditji told him that his whole house was open for search... but added... to search his house they would not take less than six months to do justice to it. This was [Panditji's] inborn humour...'

'I could see the poor fellow [the police officer] wanted to say something more which he would not take the courage to say. But Panditji came to his rescue. Reading the search warrant again... he asked the [police official] if Govern-

1. Unpublished. (N.A.I.)

2. 'I beg to offer my greetings.'

ment wanted to prosecute him under the Second clause of Section 17 of the Criminal Law Amendment Act. "Yes, sir, and I have a warrant of arrest also in my pocket," was the prompt reply. . . "Oh, I am ready for it," said Panditji, "but why did you not produce it all at once?"

The police officer was visibly nervous, but somehow he made it known that he had a warrant for the arrest of Jawaharlal as well. The grounds of Anand Bhawan were soon filled with friends and admirers. And then, to resume Godbole's account :

'The police ordered a motor, and the Pandits, old and young, father and son, son and father (spiritually Motilalji regards Jawaharlal as his father as you know) gladly entered [the car].'

Motilal dictated a farewell message to his countrymen :

'Having served you to the best of my ability, it is now my high privilege to serve the motherland by going to gaol with my only son.' Swarup Rani, who was interviewed by a press correspondent, admitted that her heart was not entirely free from 'the wrench of separation', but she 'rejoiced in the great privilege of sending my dear husband and my only son to jail'. The words, 'the only son', were heavily charged with emotion, but Swarup Rani added : 'Mahatma Gandhi told me once that others in the world have also their only sons'.

As the police van drove out of the house the grey-haired, frail Swarup Rani nearly broke down; her 22-year-old daughter-in-law Kamala bravely held back her tears. These last twelve months had demanded much from them; their whole world had been turned upside-down, and now they had taken leave of their menfolk for they did not know how long. Suspense, loneliness and heartache were going to be their portion for the rest of their lives.

The clean sweep of the Congress and Khilafat leaders in

Allahabad did not prevent a complete *hartal* on the occasion of the Prince of Wales's visit, which Motilal had organized before his arrest. When Prince Edward arrived at the Senate Hall to receive a welcome address from the Allahabad University, most of the students were absent. Those who were present had to go without food that evening; the servants in the students' hostel refused to serve them.¹

The following day, on December 7th, Motilal's trial opened in an improvised court-room in the gaol. The charge that Motilal was a Congress volunteer hardly needed any corroboration; his name had headed the list of volunteers published in his own paper, the *Independent*. However, the police did not take any chances; they produced Kirpa Ram Brahmin, a tattered and evidently illiterate fellow, who pretended to verify Motilal's signatures in Hindi by holding the documents upside down. Motilal refused to defend himself; with his four-year-old grand-daughter Indira in his arms, he cheerfully sat through the trial, which he described as a 'farce'. He was sentenced to six months' imprisonment and a fine of Rs. 500. A similar sentence was awarded to Jawaharlal who was tried separately for distributing handbills for a *hartal*. The fines were small, but both father and son refused to pay them: as non-co-operators they could not admit the jurisdiction of British courts. This gave the local police a pretext for making raids on Anand Bhawan and carrying away, despite the angry protests of little Indira, furniture and carpets worth thousands in lieu of fines of a few hundreds. For the ladies of the Nehru family, this police vandalism was a valuable training in patience. Soon after the trial, they went to Ahmedabad in response to an invitation from Gandhi to attend the annual Congress session. Swarup Rani, Kamala, Krishna and Indira had their

1 *University of Allahabad 70th Anniversary Souvenir*, p. 112.

first experience of a train journey in third class. At Ahmedabad they were soothed and uplifted by the presence of the Mahatma, but it was hard to fit in with the *ashram* routine of waking up at 4 a.m., assembling for prayers on the banks of the Sabarmati, partaking of simple but tasteless meals, sleeping on the floor, cleaning plates and washing clothes.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

LOW TIDE

The Nehrus were lodged in the District Gaol at Lucknow, the headquarters of the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Harcourt Butler, whom Motilal had known for thirty years. Arthur Moore, a former editor of *The Statesman*, has recently repeated a story which was widely current in the nineteen twenties :

'Motilal was dining with Sir Harcourt and no doubt, feeling his political views changing...and possibly shades of the prison house beginning to close around him, said laughingly to Sir Harcourt over their champagne...that one day soon he might be in prison. To which Sir Harcourt replied, "Well if that happens, I will see that you get champagne".'

Moore says that the Governor was as good as his word, and throughout Motilal's term in gaol an A.D.C. turned up from the Government House daily with 'a half-bottle of champagne wrapped in a napkin'.¹

This is a delightful anecdote; only it is not true. For one thing, under the first impact of Gandhian austerity, Motilal had at this time become a teetotaler. For another, it is difficult to believe that even a smart A.D.C. could have smuggled champagne for the elder Nehru without the knowledge of his son and nephews who lived in the same barrack.

Sir Harcourt's Government did not send champagne, but it did something to make Motilal's lot tolerable in gaol. He had the company of his son and two nephews, Shamlal and Mohanlal. He was permitted to supplement his food

1 Zakaria, Rafiq (Editor), *A Study of Nehru*, p. 173.

from outside, to write letters, to obtain newspapers and books.

This was Jawaharlal's first imprisonment, but already he seemed to be in his element. Unlike many Indian nationalists, he did not seek serenity by diving into the Hindu scriptures, but with the zest of a public schoolboy plunged into a feverish routine of physical and mental activity. He swept and dusted the gaol barrack, washed his father's and his own clothes, plied the spinning wheel, read and discussed energetically and conducted evening classes for the prisoners. He ministered to his father's wants and nursed him with a devotion which would have been impossible in the servant-ridden Anand Bhawan.

As 1922 dawned, Lucknow gaol resounded with nationalist slogans. Truck-loads of political prisoners arrived daily. The tide of non-co-operation was running high. The climax came on February 1, 1922, when Gandhi wrote to the Viceroy informing him that civil disobedience was about to begin in Bardoli in Bombay Presidency.

The Nehrus strained their ears for a clarion call to the final battle against foreign rule; all they heard was the bugle of retreat. Three days after the Mahatma had sent his ultimatum to Lord Reading, there was a clash between a procession and a party of police at Chauri Chaura, a small village in the United Provinces. The police station was burnt down and twenty-two persons, including the young son of the Sub-Inspector of Police, lost their lives.

Gandhi viewed the Chauri Chaura tragedy as a red signal, a warning that the atmosphere in the country was too explosive for a mass movement. He decided to retrace his steps, to cancel the plans for civil disobedience in Bardoli, to suspend the 'aggressive' part of the non-co-operation campaign and to shift the emphasis to the 'constructive' programme of hand-spinning, communal unity, abolition of

untouchability, etc. These decisions were like a clap of thunder to the Mahatma's adherents.

In Lucknow gaol the reactions of the Nehrus were equally violent. Motilal was beside himself with anger, while his son vented his despair in a letter which Gandhi described 'as a freezing dose'. In a long letter the Mahatma sought to justify his *volte face* and to soothe the nerves of both father and son.

Gandhi to Jawaharlal : February 19, 1922 : '...I see that all of you are terribly cut up over the resolutions of the Working Committee. I sympathize with you, and my heart goes out to Father.¹ I can picture to myself the agony through which he must have passed, but I also feel that this letter is unnecessary because I know that the first shock must have been followed by a true understanding of the situation...'

'I must tell you that this Chauri Chaura incident was the last straw...I received letters both from Hindus and Mohammedans from Calcutta, Allahabad and the Punjab, all these before the Gorakhpur incident, telling me that the wrong was not all on the Government's side, that our people were becoming aggressive, defiant and threatening, that they were getting out of hand...I assure you that if the thing had not been suspended we would have been leading not a non-violent struggle but essentially a violent struggle...The cause will prosper by this retreat. The movement had unconsciously drifted from the right path. We have come back to our moorings...'

Reading had decided to arrest Gandhi before the Chauri Chaura riot, but considered it politic to give Gandhi just sufficient time to go into reverse. By the end of February, the emasculated programme which Gandhi had already

1 Motilal.

piloted through the Working Committee at Bardoli was finally ratified by the All India Congress Committee. On March 10th he was arrested, tried for sedition and sentenced to six years' imprisonment.

After the Chauri Chaura incident Lord Reading told his son that 'Gandhi had pretty well run himself to the last ditch as a politician.'¹ A few months later, the Viceroy traced the decline 'both of the non-co-operation movement and of the prestige of its leaders. . . from the issue of the Bardoli resolutions which left the organization without any clearly defined and intelligible objectives. From that moment, disintegration and disorganization set in; enthusiasm evaporated, disillusionment and discouragement prevailed in the ranks of the party.'²

Motilal would have agreed with this analysis. But he was too shrewd publicly to assail the Mahatma, who was in gaol, whose prestige was in any case independent of the success or failure of particular policies, and whose leadership would be indispensable in years to come. In a speech at Allahabad in June delivered soon after his release, he defended Gandhi's change of front. 'For the war in which we are engaged,' he said, 'we have chalked out an entirely new line. We fight entirely with new weapons unknown to history and only have our own mistakes to profit by.' After Chauri Chaura civil disobedience had not been abandoned but suspended. 'We may have to adjust our sails to the varying winds, we may have to alter our course to avoid the shoals and the breakers ahead, we may even have to drop anchor to allow the gathering mists to clear up. But there can be no question of our changing our destination or our good ship which we have chartered for the voyage.'

1 Reading, Marquess of, *Rufus Isaacs, First Marquess of Reading*, vol. III, p. 249.

2 Telegram to Secretary of State, December 5, 1922 (N.A.I.).

Motilal was to be one of the most important influences in setting a new course. In June, 1922, the All India Congress Committee met at Lucknow to consider measures to halt the growing divisions and demoralization which had been sapping the Congress organization since Gandhi's arrest. Serious differences had arisen on at least one item in the non-co-operation programme—namely the boycott of legislatures.

This was the issue on which Gandhi had waged the hardest battle at the Calcutta Congress in September 1920, won with the narrowest margin. Among those who had then opposed him was C. R. Das. Das was not at all happy at Gandhi's conduct of the campaign of non-co-operation. He did not like the way Gandhi spurned proposals for a Round Table Conference with the Government in December 1921;¹ nor did he appreciate the reasons for the *volte face* after Chauri Chaura. Subhas Bose has recorded how Das 'was beside himself with anger and sorrow at the way Mahatma Gandhi was repeatedly bungling'. On his release from gaol Das endorsed Motilal's pleas for council-entry, not in order to co-operate with the Government, but in order to create deadlocks which would compel the Viceroy and the Governors to use their emergency powers and thus expose the true nature of the 'mock parliaments' that had been set up in India.

The Das-Nehru combination met with stiff opposition from the 'No-changers'—those who opposed changes in the programme of non-co-operation as framed by Gandhi before his arrest. These included Rajendra Prasad, Vallabhbhai Patel, C. Vijiaraaghavachariar; their chief spokesman was C. Rajagopalachari, already a leading Congressman and an exponent of Gandhian dialectics. Rajagopalachari's

¹ Nanda, B.R., *Mahatma Gandhi*, pp. 227-8.

Bose, Subhas Chandra, *The Indian Struggle*, p. 108.

keen wit, subtle logic and stamina in debate, working on the faith of the rank and file in the infallibility of the Mahatma, carried the day for the 'No-Changers' at the Gaya Congress. The result, 890 votes for council-entry and 1,740 against, was a crushing defeat for the 'Pro-Changers', particularly for Das, the president of the session.

Das and Motilal did not throw up the sponge. Immediately after the Congress session, on December 31, 1922, they convened a meeting of their supporters at the Gaya residence of the Maharaja of Tikari, a client of Motilal, and formed the 'Congress-Khilafat Swaraj Party'. Das was elected president and Motilal one of the secretaries. In fact the burden of organizing the party fell chiefly on Motilal. The new party, which came to be known as the Swaraj Party, accepted the creed of the Congress and the programme of non-co-operation, but decided to follow an independent line on the issue of council-entry.

The Gaya Congress witnessed only one round in a tug-of-war which was to last for the best part of 1923. While continuing to profess loyalty to Gandhi and the Congress, 'No-Changers' and 'Pro-Changers' engaged in a fierce struggle for the control of the party machine. Attempts at reconciliation invariably ended in fireworks of recrimination. Neither party was willing to change its ground or to accept responsibility for an irrevocable breach.

These wrangles went on until a *modus vivendi* was reached at a special Congress at Delhi in September 1923, over which Abul Kalam Azad presided. The principles of non-co-operation were reaffirmed, but those who had 'no religious or other conscientious objections against entering the legislatures' were allowed to take part in the elections. This compromise, which was ratified at an annual session at Coconada three months later, was not reached a day too soon. The elections were due in November.

The election manifesto of the Swaraj Party, which Motilal issued on October 14th, described it as 'a party within the Congress, and as such an integral part of the Congress. It is not and was never intended to be a rival organization'. The Swaraj Party did not question the principle of non-co-operation. On the contrary, it proposed 'to carry the good fight into the enemy's camp by entering the councils'.

Though the Swarajists were handicapped by strife within the Congress organization and had only a few weeks to prepare for the elections, they gave a good account of themselves. Motilal's vigorous electioneering at the age of sixty-two was astonishing.

He travelled incessantly by road and rail, addressing an endless chain of meetings till late at night. The performance of the Swaraj Party at the polls, if not spectacular, was impressive. In the Central Legislative Assembly it won 42 out of 101 elective seats; in the Central Provinces Council it won an absolute majority; in Bengal it was the largest party; in the U.P. and Assam the second largest party; in the Punjab and Madras, it made no headway against sectarian and communal elements.

It was decided that Motilal would lead the party in the Central Legislative Assembly and C. R. Das in the Bengal Council. 'Two of the ablest leaders in the Congress Camp'—this was how the Viceroy described Motilal and Das. In a confidential 'dossier' of the Swarajist legislators prepared for the Government of India soon after the elections Motilal figured as 'an outstanding leader of marked capacity. . . The General Secretary of the Swaraj Party, he engineered the very complete *hartal* and boycott at the time of the visit to Allahabad of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales in December 1921. . . His family as a whole dabbles in politics . . .'

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

JAWAHARLAL IN PRISON

Jawaharlal took no part in the controversies which preceded the birth of the Swaraj Party in the latter half of 1922, for the simple reason that he was in prison. His first term had ended prematurely in March 1922, thanks to a belated qualm of the official conscience: it was discovered that he had been wrongly convicted. It was a wrench parting from his father and almost the first thing he did after his release was to leave for Ahmedabad, where he arrived just in time to meet Gandhi in gaol and to witness his historic trial. The proceedings deeply moved Jawaharlal not only because of the stirring statement of the Mahatma, but of 'the dignity and the feeling' with which the British judge behaved towards the distinguished prisoner.

On return to Allahabad, Jawaharlal threw himself into the non-co-operation movement. His presence—and the threat of picketing—brought the local cloth merchants to heel, and the sales of foreign cloth to a standstill. He was arrested, tried on several counts, including those of 'intimidation and extortion', and sentenced to twenty-one months' imprisonment.

On return to Lucknow gaol in May 1922, young Nehru found that his father had been transferred to Naini Tal Prison and the official attitude towards political prisoners had perceptibly hardened. The initial leniency of the authorities may have been due in part to the presence of the elder Nehru—who inspired a strange awe even in his gaolers—and in part to the sudden influx of a new class of prisoners belonging to the *intelligentsia*. The Government had of

course no intention (in the words of Lord Reading) of converting imprisonment into 'a comfortable lodging at the expense of the state'.¹

On January 31, 1923, before he had completed half his term, Jawaharlal was released. The decline of the non-cooperation movement, and the differences between Hindus and Muslims, Pro-Changers and No-Changers, had encouraged the Government to grant a partial amnesty, for which there was an insistent demand in and outside the provincial and central legislatures.

Curiously enough, Motilal did not press his son to join the Swaraj Party. In 1920, he had looked around for a constituency for Jawaharlal for the U.P. Council; in 1924 he would have been glad to have him by his side in the central legislature. However, the experience of the last four years had shown him how little amenable his son's politics were to merely parental advice, so he left the task of conversion to his friend C. R. Das; but even the able advocacy of Das failed to win over Jawaharlal, who preferred the role of a mediator between the Swarajists and the No-Changers. As one of the chief architects of the ill-fated Bombay compromise, Jawaharlal was elected a member of the short-lived Working Committee representing the 'Centre Party' in the Indian National Congress. His *début* on the stage of national politics in the summer of 1923 revealed his peculiar assets and limitations: while his idealistic and sensitive mind rebelled against pettiness and the scramble for power, he himself was too remote from the personal and factional manoeuvres to be able effectively to control them.

The instinct which kept young Nehru out of political squabbles of 1922-5 was a sound one. If he had been drawn into them, not only would his own intellectual growth have

1. Reading, Marquess of, *Rufus Isaacs, First Marquess of Reading*, vol. II, p. 236.

suffered, but he might not have been able to offer in the late 'twenties that romantic and unsullied image which helped to make him the hero of youth, the hope of the national movement and the heir of the Mahatma.

In September 1923, Jawaharlal attended the Special Congress at Delhi which patched up a truce between the Swarajists and the No-Changees. At the end of the session he decided to take a day off to visit Nabha, which was much in the news because of clashes between Akali demonstrators and the police. Little did he know that a 'strange and unexpected adventure' was in store for him.

The Akali movement had originally professed a religious aim : the rescue of the Sikh shrines from the corrupt control of the *Mahants*. But the attack on these vested interests inevitably brought the Akalis into conflict with the Government. In 1923 they started an agitation against the deposition of the Maharaja of Nabha. The tangle of dynastic rivalries between the sister states of Patiala and Nabha, and the squalid intrigues which had preceded the downfall of the ruler of Nabha, could hardly be solved by marching *jathas*—bands of volunteers—from British India. But such reasoning did not enter the calculations of the Akalis; they could command men, money and emotion for a movement which, so long as it remained non-violent, was designed to enlist nationalist sympathy.

On September 21, 1923, Jawaharlal, accompanied by two of his Congress friends, Dr. Gidwani and K. Santhanam, followed an Akali *jatha* from Muktsar in British India to Jaito on the frontier of Nabha state. On arrival at Jaito, all the three were served with orders directing them to leave the state territory immediately. They protested that they were not members of the Akali *jatha* but only spectators, that they had already entered the Nabha state, that the next railway train was not due to leave Jaito for several hours.

Their protests were ignored; they were arrested and taken to the police lock-up. In the evening Santhanam's left wrist was handcuffed to Jawaharlal's right wrist; led by a policeman who held a chain attached to the handcuff, the prisoners were marched through the streets of that small town. The experience was deeply humiliating until the humour of the situation dawned upon Jawaharlal : the sight resembled that of 'a dog being led by a chain'. That night he and his two colleagues, handcuffed to each other, remained packed in a third class carriage of a slow-moving passenger train. The following day they arrived in Nabha, the state capital, where they were locked up in the local gaol in a small, damp, insanitary cell with a ceiling so low that their heads touched it.

Immediately after his arrest at Jaito, Jawaharlal had written two letters. 'I have been arrested here, this afternoon,' he briefly informed his wife 'we do not know exactly where we will be tried and taken to... please don't worry.' To his father he wrote : 'We have been fortunate enough to be arrested... We have been waiting here for the last few hours in the police station, and do not know what is going to happen. Whatever that may be, we are thoroughly satisfied... Do not worry.'

Motilal had seen too much of the world—the world of Indian states—not to worry. Some of the Punjab states were notorious for their sordid atmosphere of intrigue, chicanery and violence. In these states life and honour were cheap and inconvenient persons had a habit of disappearing mysteriously. He sensed the hazards to the health, and indeed the life of his son. He telegraphed (September 23rd) to the Viceroy. Thanks to the intervention of the Government of India, Motilal was permitted to interview Jawaharlal. To secure this interview he had struggled for a whole week, travelled hundreds of miles by road and rail, kept anxious

vigil in railway trains and waiting rooms, conducted a wordy duel with the British Administrator of Nabha and even secured the intervention of the Viceroy. Then came the anti-climax. Jawaharlal absolutely refused to be defended. He would not hear of an appeal to the Viceroy; his only advice to his father was to go back to Allahabad and 'not to worry'.

The Nabha episode ended as dramatically as it had begun. Jawaharlal, Gidwani and Santhanam received sentences amounting to two and a half years each; but immediately afterwards 'an executive order' of the Administrator of Nabha, 'suspended' the sentence and expelled them from the state.

On return to Allahabad, Jawaharlal received a letter from his friend Sri Prakasa, congratulating him on his 'lucky escape from Nabha land'. 'Would to God,' wrote Sri Prakasa, 'you did not put your head into the noose too often.' For Motilal it had been an agonizing fortnight. Jawaharlal went through the ordeal more philosophically, but he had to pay an additional price in the form of a virulent attack of typhoid fever which he and his companions contracted in Nabha prison.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

The Legislative Assembly, the scene of Motilal's triumphs and trials during the next six years, was not a sovereign body like the British House of Commons or the Indian Lok Sabha of today. Its constitution reflected the transitional stage in the unresolved struggle between British imperialism and Indian nationalism. It had a majority of elected members; it enjoyed wider powers of debate and criticism than its predecessor, the Imperial Legislative Council, over which the Viceroy personally presided. But it could not control, much less overthrow, the executive. The Government of India was responsible not to the Indian legislature at Delhi, but to His Majesty's Government in London. In the Legislative Assembly a permanent and irremovable executive confronted a permanent opposition; the disciplined group of forty-odd Swarajists was matched by almost an equal number of officials, non-officials and Europeans. Between these two groups, implacably opposed to each other, were fifty-odd members who were wooed by both sides. Early in 1924 Motilal was able to enlist the co-operation of Jinnah and Malaviya and thus obtain the support of about thirty Moderate and Muslim members; the resultant coalition, the 'Nationalist Party', was able to out-vote the Government in the opening session.

In this as in other legislatures, there were quite a few members who owed their seats to good fortune, the favour of a patron or the grace of the Government. The names of these mediocrities are buried in the printed record of the Assembly waiting to be momentarily resurrected by a patient

scholar. There were, however, eminent figures in that Assembly who would have made a mark in any parliament in any country at any time. Bipin Chandra Pal was the hero of the partition in Bengal, who had thundered from a thousand platforms : in 1924 he was an extinct volcano. Sir Hari Singh Gour was a prolific writer and speaker, who was often on his feet at question-time. Sir Purshotamdas Thakurdas, the Bombay magnate, was noted for his expert knowledge of commercial and industrial matters. Sir P. S. Sivaswamy Iyer specialized in military topics. N. M. Joshi was passionately interested in labour problems. Diwan Chaman Lall and T. C. Goswami were young firebrands of the Swaraj Party, the 'lion-cubs' of Motilal. K. C. Neogy and Shanmukham Chetty were promising young men whose careers were to continue to our own day.

The president of the Assembly, Sir Frederick Whyte, was noted for his dignity, impartiality and the tenacious memory which enabled him to recognize every member by name and face almost on the opening day. The Leader of the Treasury Benches and of the House was Sir Malcolm Hailey, the Home Member, who possessed great experience, astuteness and skill in debate. He was soon to be succeeded by the more genial Sir Alexander Muddiman, whose innate courtesy, good-humour and resilience sometimes helped to take the edge off the inevitable bitterness.

One of the most distinguished members in the Assembly was M. A. Jinnah, the future founder of Pakistan, who had left the Congress when its reins had fallen into Gandhi's hands. Though during the years 1922-3 there had been a talk of his joining the Swaraj Party, he was the leader of an 'Independent' group. He had a superior, almost supercilious air and his usual attitude to those he encountered was one of withering scorn. Curiously enough, his relations with Motilal were friendly. This may have been because he found it

easier to understand a fellow lawyer, treating politics as a practical game, than a saint who professed to spiritualize them. Or perhaps he sensed that calculated insolence would not work with Motilal, but was likely to be returned with interest. In any case, in 1924 Jinnah was still a 'Muslim Mazzini', whose nationalism was not swallowed either by conceit or communalism.

Madan Mohan Malaviya's noble bearing, immaculate dress and silvery eloquence won him respect of all sections of the Assembly. He had attended some of the earliest sessions of the Indian National Congress and had taken an active part in the proceedings. In 1918-19 he was regarded as a firebrand by the Government. However, in the nineteen twenties he seemed a giant laggard from the Moderate era, wavering on the sidelines when Gandhi started his campaigns, at one moment seeking a truce between the Congress and the Government, at another courting imprisonment. His deeply religious outlook and strict orthodoxy, which gave him his unique hold on the Hindu masses, also made his politics, like those of his friend Lajpat Rai, suspect to Muslims. Lajpat Rai himself did not join the Swaraj Party until January 1926. His powerful intellect and flaming eloquence would have made him a great asset to the party; unfortunately, he could not resist the siren call of Responsive Co-operation which split the Swarajists soon afterwards.

Another colourful personality in the Assembly was Vithalbhai Javerbhai Patel, who became a thorn in the flesh of the executive, first as an unrelenting critic, and then as the president of the Assembly. He was not an easy man to work with, but he had a good deal of the singleness of purpose, subtlety, grit and resilience of his more famous brother Vallabbhai Patel.

The most striking figure in the Legislative Assembly was perhaps Motilal himself. His entry into the House was

always an event : the fascinated eyes of members and visitors fastened on the princely profile, the majestic, immaculately dressed figure of the Leader of the Opposition, moving forward with measured steps and regal dignity to his seat. He seemed to be in his element; it was as if all his life had been a preparation for this supreme moment. He brought to bear on his legislative work the unremitting industry which had been the secret of his success at the Bar. It is significant that while Jinnah stayed in the luxurious Maiden's Hotel, Motilal took up his lodgings in the Western Court where most of the members of his party were staying. He kept a vigilant eye and a firm hand on the Swaraj Party, which came to be recognized in and outside the Assembly as a disciplined assault force.

Jayakar, who knew Motilal both as a colleague and as an opponent, has recorded :

'Whenever he spoke in the Legislative Assembly, it was distilled sense and reason. Even when he let out pyrotechnics, they rose from *terra firma* and came back to *terra firma*'.

Jayakar refers to the superb dignity and self-confidence of Motilal who rose, 'from the daintiest meal with the quiet self-possession of a person accustomed to enjoy the choicest gifts of life, as if they were merely his due'. European members of the Assembly, even members of the Viceroy's Council, found in Motilal a charming guest and a delightful host. 'My wife and I delighted to entertain him,' writes Sir George Shuster, 'and he always talked freely to her'. It was common knowledge that Sir Alexander Muddiman and Motilal hit it off very well. What was it that drew Motilal to the representatives of the Empire which he was openly trying to subvert? Jayakar suggests that 'some secret affinity appeared to exist between them born perhaps of the power to rule and govern men'. It is significant that the finest tribute to

Motilal's role as Leader of the Opposition came from Sir George Rainy, a member of the Viceroy's Council, who recalled the 'well-remembered figure...that exquisite fitness of attire which symbolized the clean fighter and the great gentleman and that impressive face, deeply lined and careworn, on which character and intellect were so deeply imprinted... He had a personality which impressed itself on the most unobservant. Eminent as a lawyer, eminent as a speaker, and in the first rank as a political leader, he could not but take the foremost place wherever he might be, whether within these walls or outside. The quickness of his intellect, his skill in debate, his adroitness as a tactician and his strength of purpose rendered him a formidable adversary in controversy'.

On February 8, 1924, within ten days of the opening of the Legislative Assembly, a resolution was moved by Diwan Bahadur Rangachariar, a non-Swarajist member, demanding a Royal Commission for the revision of the Government of India Act so as to secure for India the status of a Dominion within the British Empire. Motilal moved an amendment proposing that the new constitution should be framed by a 'representative Round Table Conference', and approved by a newly-elected Legislative Assembly in India before it was embodied in a statute by the British Parliament.

On behalf of the Government, Sir Malcolm Hailey catalogued the numerous interests which blocked India's progress to freedom : the Indian Princes, European commerce, the Secretary of State's Services, the Minorities. He argued that responsible government promised by the declaration of August 1917, was not 'necessarily incompatible with a legislature with limited or restricted powers', that India could advance towards its destined goal only gradually, that the British Government was the sole judge of the manner and measure of each step, that the next step, the appointment of a

Royal Commission, could be taken only after the ten years stipulated in the preamble to the Government of India Act, 1919, had elapsed.

Motilal blandly questioned Hailey's premises. 'Now, sir,' he said, 'our answer, straight and clear, as unequivocal as the Preamble, is that the Preamble is bad, the whole Act [of 1919] is... bad... devised to postpone, to stifle, and to suppress the natural desire [for freedom] in the country'. He pointed out that his amendment had been deliberately toned down to secure the co-operation of other parties in the Assembly. 'We have come here', he added, 'to offer our co-operation, non-co-operators as we are, if you will care to co-operate with us. That is why we are here. If you agree to have it, we are your men; if you do not, we shall, like men, stand upon our rights and continue to be non-co-operators.'

This was Motilal's maiden speech. 'So thoughtfully phrased with such facility,' was the compliment which Hailey paid to it. On the constitutional issue, Hailey did not make any concession : all that he could promise was an inquiry into such defects as might come to light in the working of the constitution.

Seventy-six members voted in favour of Motilal's amendment and forty-eight against it. The latter included the compact bloc of officials, nominated non-officials, Europeans and a few Indian members who were always at the beck and call of the official whip. This was the first and the most spectacular defeat inflicted by the Swaraj Party on the Government; it was made possible by the co-operation of Muslims and Moderates who followed the lead of Jinnah and Malaviya. Thanks to this co-operation, the first four budget grants were rejected in their entirety, the Finance Bill was thrown out on its introduction, and again on the following day, after it had been returned by the Viceroy for

reconsideration. Later in the year, the Swaraj Party inflicted a crushing defeat on the Government when the Legislative Assembly rejected the proposals of the Lee Commission on the Imperial Services. In actual practice all this had only a nuisance value for the Government. The Viceroy had the last word under the constitution; with a stroke of the pen he could veto resolutions passed by the legislature, and 'certify' as law measures rejected by it.

The emergence of the Swaraj Party on the Indian political stage coincided with a new development in Britain: the advent of a Labour Government in January 1924. Since the days of Keir Hardie, Indian nationalism had struck sympathetic chords in the Labour Party. The new Premier, Ramsay MacDonald, had visited India in 1909 and published some forthright criticisms of the Indian Administration. A parliamentary committee of the Labour Party for Indian Affairs had been formed under the chairmanship of Colonel Wedgwood—a friend of Motilal Nehru and Lajpat Rai.

There is evidence to suggest that in the first months of the Labour Government hopes of a reconciliation between the Congress and the Government rose high—for a while.

In the spring of 1924, S. R. Bomanji, a Bombay politician, a friend of Motilal, Lajpat Rai and Colonel Wedgwood, was in London and in touch with several ministers including Ramsay MacDonald himself. A glimpse of his activities behind the scenes is furnished by his letters to Motilal.

S. R. Bomanji to Motilal, March 20, 1924: 'I must congratulate you on the brilliant way you have defeated the Government and rejected the whole budget. Your successive rejections, even by the diminishing majority, had a very chastening effect on the die-hards here. If you can exert still greater pressure on your side, I clearly see victory for us. . . Wedgwood told me that he had received your letters and he found them very useful and asked me to tell you about it.'

A conference in London between Indian leaders and British statesmen, on the Irish model, seemed on the cards, and Bomanji even speculated on the personnel of the two delegations. MacDonald, Olivier, Wedgwood, Chelmsford and C. P. Trevelyan were mentioned as British representatives; C. R. Das, Motilal, Ansari, Jinnah, Kelkar and a few others were expected to represent the Indian side. Bomanji's optimism was suddenly deflated by an interview with MacDonald who professed great annoyance at the Swarajist tactics in the Indian Legislative Assembly.

Bomanji to Motilal, March 27, 1924 : 'Since writing to you last mail, I saw the Prime Minister. He complained of your holding a pistol at him till he was finally in the saddle. I remonstrated that we gave a fortnight's notice asking for a Round Table Conference, and the Government's reply left us no hope or opening and we were bound to stop the budget grants; otherwise we would be powerless to have our grievances redressed for another twelve months. Your prompt reply was very timely. I showed it to the P.M. . . . I have assured the P.M. as to your sincerity and reasonableness, but he fears that your moderation may not be shared by your colleagues. I have tried to disabuse his mind. . . I have sent you a wire today drafted by Wedgwood.'

Bomanji had an uneasy feeling that senior officials of the India Office in London had got wind of 'what I am doing, and that the Prime Minister has been passing over the regular channels, and I have been made to communicate with you and C. R. Das'. Bomanji suspected that the British bureaucrats in Delhi were conspiring with the British bureaucrats in London to sabotage the negotiations. A few days later, Premier MacDonald, seizing on what he considered a premature leakage of the talks in the Indian press, sent a note to Bomanji expressing his 'profound regret at the way things had gone. . . if you had seen your way to have kept things

going for a few days more, something might have come out of it, as we are working very hard indeed at this end to come to some arrangements.'

It is difficult to say how far Bomanji's initial hopes were based on political possibilities and how far on wishful thinking. Srinivasa Sastri, who was in London in the summer of 1924 shrewdly summed up the situation : 'The ministry has no big plan for India. It only wishes to tide over the difficulty somehow.'¹ In April 1924, Beatrice Webb, whose husband was in the Cabinet, noted in her diary that MacDonald was determined to prolong the precarious life of his Government by shedding the radical wing of his party, by courting the Conservatives, and generally playing the role of a 'political charmer.'² This was hardly the posture for a British Prime Minister who wanted to take a bold initiative in India.

1. Jagadisan, T. N., *Letters of V. S. Srinivasa Sastri*, p. 260.

2. Cole, Margaret (Editor), *Beatrice Webb's Diaries 1924-1932*, p. 25.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

TUSSLE WITH GANDHI

Just when the Swarajists were mounting their assault upon the Government, a new and important development took place. Gandhi, a state prisoner in Yeravda gaol, was operated upon for appendicitis and released on February 5, 1924, on grounds of health before he had served a third of his six years' term.

The Bombay Government, when recommending the Mahatma's release, had mentioned the possibility that he 'would denounce the Swarajists for their defection from the pure principles of non-co-operation, and thus considerably reduce in legislatures their power for harm'. Motilal was naturally anxious to secure Gandhi's support, or at least benevolent neutrality, in the unresolved tug-of-war with the 'No-Changers'. In March the Mahatma moved down for convalescence to Juhu, a seaside suburb near Bombay. As the Legislative Assembly was in session Motilal could not immediately leave Delhi; but he tried to impress Gandhi with the spectacular achievements of his party. On March 18th, when the Legislative Assembly rejected the Finance Bill for a second time, Motilal telegraphed the good news to the Mahatma. 'I have your telegram,' Gandhi replied, 'I rejoice because the victory gives you joy but I cannot enthuse over it. . . I never doubted your very great tactfulness and persuasive eloquence.' What Gandhi questioned was not the immediate success of the Swarajist tactics but the ultimate wisdom of their strategy.

The basic differences between Motilal and Gandhi came into relief during the long negotiations at Juhu in April-May,

1924. 'The two minds so strongly dissimilar,' wrote C. F. Andrews, who was at Juhu at this time, 'would not always work together.' Motilal's arguments were reinforced at a later stage by C. R. Das, but even the combined advocacy of these two brilliant lawyers could not convert Gandhi. Eventually they agreed to differ and issued separate statements.

Gandhi described the Swarajist leaders as 'the ablest, most experienced and honest patriots'; at the same time he acknowledged that his differences with them were not of 'mere detail'. Though he advised the 'No-Changers' not to obstruct the activities of the Swarajists, he argued that council-entry was inconsistent with non-co-operation; that a general policy of 'obstruction' in the councils was undesirable; that the councils should be used, if at all, to implement the constructive programme of the Congress.

Gandhi's arguments were refuted in a closely reasoned statement issued by C. R. Das and Motilal. The rift between the Mahatma and the Swarajists was open. It was much deeper than the studied courtesy of the press statements made it out to be. Motilal's own views were expressed candidly, even pungently, in a memorandum he prepared on an earlier rough draft of Gandhi's press statement.

'I agree,' he wrote, 'that the difference between Mahatmaji and me is in some respects one of principle and not of mere detail. Indeed on a close examination, I have come to the conclusion that it goes deeper and lies more in the theory on which the principle is based than in the principle itself. Let us take Non-violence and Non-co-operation separately. . . Mahatmaji's Non-violence is carried on a very much higher plane than what I have agreed to adopt. . . The doctrine of *Ahimsa* (non-violence) with all its implications and logical deductions has not been and cannot be adopted by the Congress. . . Whilst Mahatmaji is not prepared to resort to

violence under any circumstances whatever in thought, word or deed, many true Congressmen would under certain conditions consider it their highest duty to resort to actual physical violence. In fact I hold that it would be doing violence to the highest and noblest feelings implanted in man, if we ruled out violence in any shape or form under all conceivable circumstances. If I see a bully ill-treating or assaulting a person weaker than himself, I would not merely interpose my body between the assailant and the victim, and thus enable him to have two victims instead of one, but to try to knock him down and thus save both his victim and myself. Again, if I were assaulted, I would defend myself, if necessary, by inflicting violence on my assailant, and that violence under certain circumstances may extend even to the causing of the assailant's death. . . .

'As for violence in thought it is obvious that one who is prepared to resort to actual violence on certain occasions, cannot be entirely free from the thought of it. By joining the movement of non-violent non-co-operation, all I have undertaken to do is, to refrain from inflicting, or even contemplating, violence of any kind in carrying out the programme of non-co-operation against the Government. . . . If a Government official chooses to behave to me like the bully of my illustration in matters wholly unconnected with the Congress programme, he shall receive exactly the same treatment as I would give to the bully. The doctrine of non-violence has, so far as I am concerned, a limited application for the very special purpose for which I have adopted it. . . .

'Mahatmaji says entry into councils is tantamount to participation in violence. I understand this to refer to the fact that the councils are established by a Government which is based on violence. I maintain that no one living under such a Government can help participating in violence in that sense. . . .

'Mahatmaji has been pleased to doubt the accuracy of the statement, "that most Congressmen confine the definition of non-violence to mere abstention from causing physical hurt to his opponent". There may be some who take the extreme view in theory, but I do not know a single follower of Mahatmaji who acts upon it. It is true that non-violence, even in the limited sense that I give to it, must relate to both word and deed and cannot be confined to abstention from causing physical hurt only. But non-violence in thought must be ruled out entirely as impracticable. Otherwise, we shall be weaving a cobweb of casuistry around us from which it would be impossible to extricate ourselves.'

Motilal was dealing with the practical and not the theoretical aspects of non-violence. If he treated its philosophical and spiritual implications somewhat casually, he had at least the courage to cut through the thickets of make-believe behind which many of Gandhi's close associates were often tempted to take shelter. In the last year of his life Gandhi was to realize the truth of some of these criticisms and to discover how few of those who professed to follow him were prepared to pursue non-violence to its logical conclusions.

Motilal applied the same ruthless logic to the rest of Gandhi's thesis. He deprecated the continuing emphasis on the Khilafat and Punjab wrongs (which were 'practically dead') and on the 'triple boycott' proclaimed in 1920. 'The honest thing to do,' he asserted, 'is to admit failure and frankly give up the triple boycott. The Swarajists would have done it, had it not been for their belief that they had no chance of success with the masses against Mahatmaji's teaching.' Council-entry, he argued, was not a negation but an extension of non-co-operation to a new field. The legislatures, with their peculiar composition and limited powers, were an ornamental rather than essential part of the apparatus of British rule in India. By creating deadlocks in these legis-

latures, the Swarajists hoped to expose to the world the true nature of these 'sham parliaments'.

Gandhi had suggested that the programme of obstruction had a strong smell of violence. 'Our Swarajist nostrils,' Motilal retorted, 'are not trained enough to smell violence in it and fail to see how the Swarajist programme can have a stronger smell of violence than the breaking of the Criminal Law Amendment Act and the various forms of picketing and hartals authorized by the Congress. I take civil disobedience itself as the highest form of obstruction.'

The conflict came to a head at the Ahmedabad meeting of the All India Congress Committee in the last week of June. Previously anyone who paid four annas and accepted the creed of the Congress could become a member. Gandhi's proposal to limit membership of the Congress to those who sent in 2,000 yards of self-spun yarn was resisted by Motilal and Das, who carried their protest to the point of staging a walk-out from the meeting. They were persuaded to return, but another, and from Gandhi's point of view a more serious clash took place, when Das did not whole-heartedly support Gandhi's resolution condemning the murder of an English official by a young Bengali, Gopinath Saha. That some of his senior colleagues should have mental reservations about non-violence even in its political applications came as a bitter disillusionment to Gandhi. There were tears in his eyes. 'I felt,' he confessed later, 'that God was speaking to me . . . and seemed to say, "Thou fool, knowest not thou that thou art impossible? Thy time is up"'.¹

A split in the Congress, wider and deeper than that which had paralysed it for a decade after the Surat Congress, loomed large. But Gandhi, who was to preside over the Belgaum Congress in December 1924, was not spoiling for a fight—least of all with Motilal.

1. Tendulkar, D. G., *Mahatma*, vol. II, p. 189.

Gandhi to Motilal, August 15, 1924 : 'I thank you for your letter. The more I think of it the more my soul rises against a battle for power at Belgaum. But I do not want to be mixed up with the council's programme. This can only happen by Swarajists manning the Congress or their not acting upon the Congress... I would gladly occupy the place I did from 1915 to 1918. My purpose is not to weaken the power of the Swarajists, certainly not to embarrass them. Show me the way and I shall try my best to suit you...'

Gandhi was ready to step off the political stage. Motilal was as fair-minded in rejecting the offer as Gandhi had been in making it. He replied to Gandhi on August 25th :

'I for one will be no party to an agreement which is based upon your retirement from the Congress as a condition precedent, not because I have the least doubt in my mind of being fully able to run it with my colleagues throughout the country according to our lights, but because of the fact [that] stipulating for your retirement goes against my very soul, quite apart from the public odium involved in it. I have the misfortune to differ from you and am prepared to take the consequences at the hands of the country in the normal way, but not by taking from you an agreement disabling yourself... You are of course your own master and can take what step you think proper, but it shall not be at our request, if it imposes the least disability or restraint on you...'

There were good reasons on both sides for not pressing differences to a breach. Motilal and Das were aware of the unique influence exercised by Gandhi on the masses. With his position beyond the possibility of damage by any temporal authority, Gandhi had no desire—and no need—to control the party machine. His faith in the ultimate victory of his doctrine and his method was so firm that he could afford to wait for more propitious times. Moreover, he was anxious about the growing communal antagonism in the

country which was clearly more dangerous than the Swarajist heresy. He had too wholesome a respect for Das and Motilal—the two giants of the Swaraj Party—to seek a head-on collision with them. With Motilal his relations transcended the political nexus. In the last week of July when the controversy was at its height Motilal learned from press reports that Gandhi was indisposed, and immediately sent him an affectionate rebuke.

Motilal to Gandhi, July 28, 1924 : ‘... I am getting very anxious about your health. The most obvious thing to do is to stop all work at once and take complete rest. But the misfortune is that you will not do this... I shall be perfectly frank with you even at the risk of offending you. Let me tell you plainly that the kind of work you are doing at present can wait, and the nation will not be poorer if it is not done at all...’

‘Let me ask you a question. Would you put me down as mad, if I were to ask you to spend a few weeks on the bank of Ganges some five miles out of Allahabad, at a garden house belonging to a friend of mine which is at my entire disposal? This is the only alternative to your going out to sea that I can think of for the benefit of your health.’

The sins and sorrows of his countrymen made it impossible for the Mahatma to take a holiday. In September 1924, he went, not on a cruise, but on a twenty-one-day fast, in a desperate effort to stem the tide of communal bitterness and bloodshed. He had not recovered from the after-effects of the fast when he had to leave for Bengal where the Government had promulgated an ordinance, raided the offices of the Swaraj Party and arrested its prominent members, including Subhas Bose, a lieutenant of C. R. Das. The authorities accused the Swaraj Party of complicity in anarchical crime. Gandhi challenged them to prove the charge in a court of law. ‘The Rowlatt Act is dead,’ he wrote, ‘but the spirit

that prompted it is evergreen.' As an answer to what he considered an offensive against the Swaraj Party in Bengal, Gandhi decided to throw his weight in favour of unity in the Congress and in the country. He reached an agreement with Das and Motilal, according to which non-co-operation (except for the boycott of foreign cloth) was to be formally suspended and the Swaraj Party was to become an integral part of the Congress with powers to raise and administer its own funds. In November 1924, he was present at an All Parties Conference in Bombay at which he invited the leaders of various parties including Jinnah, Mrs. Besant, Motilal, Chintamani and others to explore a common political platform and present a united front to the Government.

The Belgaum Congress over which Gandhi presided in December 1924, ratified his agreement with Das and Motilal. The Mahatma made yet another chivalrous gesture to the Swarajists by giving them a majority of seats in the Working Committee for the year 1925. To some observers, including his faithful 'No-Changers', it seemed that Gandhi had yielded too much ground to the Swarajists. The Viceroy wrote home : 'Gandhi is now attached to the tail of Das and Nehru although they try their utmost to make him and his supporters think that he is one of the heads, if not the head.'¹

By the end of 1924 the Swaraj Party under Das and Motilal had scored all along the line. Das was president and Motilal the general secretary. The imaginative insight and emotional appeal of Das formed a perfect foil to the objectivity and down-to-earth empiricism of Motilal; their complementary qualities made them an excellent team. Such was their mutual confidence that each of them could, without prior consultation, use the other's name for any statement or declaration. Their partnership was soon to be cut short.

1. Reading, Marquess of : *Rufus Isaacs, First Marquess of Reading*, vol. II, p. 304.

Das was determined to make the working of the new constitution impossible in Bengal. He succeeded in his object. His health was, however, broken by the terrific pressure at which he was working. Once he insisted on being carried to the Council Chamber in a stretcher. B. C. Roy recalls that when Motilal came to Calcutta, Das recited his exploits and exclaimed : 'Motilal, in Bengal Dyarchy is dead.' 'Yes, Chitta,' Motilal replied, 'Dyarchy is dead, but it has been a costly death.' This premonition proved too true. In June 1925, Das died. The news reached Motilal at Chamba in the Punjab hills. 'For a long time,' writes Jawaharlal, 'father sat still without a word, bowed down with grief. It was a cruel blow to him.' Henceforth Motilal alone had to shoulder the burden of leading the Swaraj Party. How heavy the burden was to be was mercifully hidden from him in the summer of 1925.

About the same time Lord Birkenhead delivered a speech which aimed at the Congress the usual mixture of bullying and banter. 'The speech,' declared Gandhi, 'is a notice to Indians to set their house in order.' The Mahatma finally closed the rift in the Congress ranks by making further concessions to the Swarajists. The 'yarn franchise' became an alternative to the four-anna membership; The Swaraj Party became not only an integral part of the Congress, but its sole agency for political work.

The triumph of the Swarajists within the Congress was complete. Within three years the rebels of 1922 were in possession of the party machine. They had survived even Gandhi's resistance. But this resistance had been half-hearted. The Mahatma's logic may be inferred from a letter he wrote to Dr. Ansari in November 1925 : 'I could not convince the Swarajists of the error of council-entry, and knowing also that my best friends and co-workers had become Swarajists, I took it that I could not do less than throw my weight with them as against other political parties.'

CHAPTER TWENTY

RIFT IN THE LUTE

During the years 1923-5 Indian politics were in the doldrums. The Congress was riddled with personal and factional dissensions. Gandhi, though still the most revered Indian, was ploughing a lonely furrow. The middle class had relapsed into the torpor of the pre-Gandhian era, from which it was occasionally roused by the noisy advocates of communalism. For the landed and titled gentry and the high officials life again was on an even keel; once again they could look forward to such prizes as an invitation to a Government House party.

For Jawaharlal the aridity of politics was partly offset by domestic happiness. In the first flush of Satyagraha in 1919-21 he had lived in public meetings and railway trains. It took him some time to realize how much he had drawn upon the patience of his family, particularly that of his wife.

Both father and son had given up legal practice during the non-co-operation movement. After his release from gaol Motilal resumed it in his spare time, but Jawaharlal could not bring himself to go back to his profession. Jawaharlal did not spend much, but the thought of being dependent upon his father at the age of thirty-four made him unhappy. He welcomed a proposal which would have made him a salaried General Secretary of the All India Congress; but to his chagrin the prejudice against payment for political work from public funds proved too strong, and the proposal fell through. He could of course have got a well-paid job, but he feared it might distract and even compromise him. Torn between these conflicting considerations he sought Gandhi's advice. The Mahatma was sympathetic.

Gandhi to Jawaharlal, September 15, 1924 : '... Shall I try to arrange some money for you? Why may you not take up remunerative work? After all you must live by the sweat of your brow even though you may be under Father's roof. Will you be correspondent to some newspaper or will you take up a professorship?'

Jawaharlal knew that even a reference to this subject was likely to hurt his father. Somehow he screwed himself up to broach it. Motilal pointed out that it was foolish and unnecessary for Jawaharlal to sacrifice all or most of his political activities in order to make ends meet. After all, the father could easily earn in a week what the son would take a year to spend. The argument was not without force, though it did not resolve the son's conflict. The consolation young Nehru offered to Mahadev Desai in August 1923, applied equally to himself.

'I have also the good fortune of having experienced to the full the depths of a father's love and many times I have wondered if I was repaying in any way the love and care that had been lavished upon me from the day of my birth. I have had to face that question often and every time I have felt shame at my own record...'

'The lesson of service you learnt from your father you have carried to the outer world. Your father could hardly have grudged this or preferred a narrow domestic sphere for you to the wider service of the country.'

Jawaharlal's wife, Kamala, had not been well for some time. In November 1924, she gave birth to a son who died after a few days. Her health took a serious turn; in November 1925, her illness was diagnosed as tuberculosis. Dr. M. A. Ansari, equally eminent as a nationalist leader and as a doctor, was consulted and suggested that she should be taken to Geneva for treatment. Gandhi, to whom the family always turned for solace in moments of crisis, agreed.

During the winter months Kamala lay in a hospital at Lucknow, and Jawaharlal, who was the General Secretary of the Congress, was kept busy travelling between Allahabad, Lucknow and Cawnpore, the venue of the 1925 Congress. Difficulties arose over the issue of a passport. Jawaharlal refused to give an undertaking that during his stay in Europe he would not take part in politics. Motilal spoke to Sir Alexander Muddiman and the Government of India advised the U.P. Government that 'having regard to all the circumstances it would be undesirable that such an undertaking should be required.'

In March 1926, Jawaharlal sailed from Bombay with his wife and daughter; with them in the same boat were his sister Vijayalakshmi and her husband Ranjit who had planned their holiday in Europe long before Kamala's illness. Jawaharlal had expected to be away from India only for six months; actually he did not return till December, 1927. In the summer of 1926 he was joined by his younger sister, Krishna. Kamala was under treatment at Geneva for the first few months before she was taken to a sanatorium in Montana.

Jawaharlal went to Europe at a time when the First World War was still a recent memory, and the Second World War not yet in sight; the aftermath of 1919 persisted, the pity and fear of 1939 were still unguessed. Europe was in the grip of labour unrest, unemployment and muffled echoes of class-war which gave rise to a variety of nostrums, Socialism, Communism and Fascism.

Jawaharlal saw that powerful forces were at work in the world which could not but affect India. In Geneva, and even more in Montana, there was plenty of time for reading and reflection. From his vantage point in Switzerland, he was able to survey Indian politics in a fresh perspective. The petty squabbles which filled the columns of Indian news-

papers faded out, and the basic issues of Indian nationalism came into focus.

Jawaharlal also began to see the limitations of a purely political approach to his country's problems; a brand-new constitution alone could not carry India far without those social and economic changes which had been arrested by the natural conservatism of a foreign bureaucracy and its anxiety not to antagonize vested interests.

It was perhaps because he was stimulated by his son that Motilal began to show a keener appreciation of the economic factor in Indian politics.

Motilal to Jawaharlal, January 27, 1927 : You ask me to read books on the world situation. My misfortune has always been that I could never find the time to read anything which was not necessary for the immediate need of the moment... You have done a lot of reading... But let me again impress on you the great need of the most careful study of economics and finance for a public man in India. The present controversy on the currency question has revealed the fact that many hundreds of crores [of rupees] have been taken out of the country by the simple process of manipulating the exchange and adjusting the tariff to suit the British manufacturer and merchant. And yet the first and the latest protest made by any public man in India was by Gokhale ! Dadabhoy, Dutt and Digby only approached the fringe of the problem.'

The highlight of Jawaharlal's European trip came in February 1927, when he attended the 'Congress of Oppressed Nationalities' at Brussels, along with representatives of a number of countries in the Middle and Far East, North Africa, Central and South America, Italy, France and Britain. At Jawaharlal's suggestion the Gauhati Congress (December, 1926) decided to participate in the Brussels Conference and nominated him as its delegate. Jawahar-

lal wrote to Srinivas Iyengar, the Congress President, to ask whether he might define the political goal of the Congress as independence; the word 'Swaraj' had been rather vaguely employed in Congress resolutions. 'I have seen your letter to Srinivas Iyenger,' Motilal told Jawaharlal. 'You are quite right in saying that you cannot put the case for India any lower than the people of other countries do. Saklatwala [Communist] M.P. is here and is making great fun of Dominion Status theory. It is of course unnecessary for you to mention it. We (the Congress) ask for *Swaraj* and you can interpret it to mean independence, as indeed it is.'

While his son was seeking fresh perspectives in the solitudes of Switzerland, Motilal was in the centre of the parliamentary arena. The opposition to the Swarajists within the Congress had died down. Gandhi let them hold the political stage, while he and his close adherents—the few that remained—engaged themselves in the task of 'nation-building' by propagating hand-spinning, Hindu-Muslim unity and the abolition of untouchability.

The Swarajists had gone to the councils to wreck them 'from within', by throwing out official resolutions, refusing supplies and creating a constitutional impasse. They succeeded in inflicting a series of defeats on the Government during the years 1924-5. But their very success contained the germs of ultimate failure. Except in the Central Provinces they did not command an absolute majority in any legislature and needed the support of other parties to out-vote the Government. That support was sometimes (though not always) forth-coming, but at a price. The price was the whittling down of the original Swarajist programme. In Bengal Legislative Council Das was able to hold the Government at bay, but only after conceding sectarian claims which survived long after Das was dead

and his Muslim supporters had dropped off from the Swaraj Party.

In the Central Legislative Assembly Motilal was at first able to reach an understanding with the Moderate and the Muslim groups. The coalition, which came to be known as the Nationalist Party, commanded the allegiance of more than 70 of the 101 elected members; it carried everything before it in the opening session in 1924. But like all coalitions it had to take into account the lowest common measure of agreement among its component elements. The alignment of forces on the floor of the Legislative Assembly thus made the Swarajist strategy of 'uniform, continuous and consistent obstruction' impracticable. In his maiden speech in the Central Assembly on February 8, 1924, on the grant of self-government to India, Motilal admitted that he had 'toned down' his resolution 'to meet the wishes of friends who are not Swarajists in this Assembly'.

The discipline of the Swaraj Party, which had won the admiration of friends and foes, received a rude jolt early in October 1925, when Tambe, the Swarajist president of the Central Provinces Legislative Council, accepted a seat on the Governor's executive council. Motilal lost no time in denouncing Tambe's action, but was shocked to discover that it had apologists, if not supporters, among his senior colleagues in the Swaraj Party. One of them, N. C. Kelkar, telegraphed his congratulations to Tambe, and another, M. R. Jayakar, openly advocated a change in the Swarajist strategy by harking back to Tilak's slogan of 'Responsive co-operation'.

Motilal rightly sensed that the very foundation of the Swaraj Party, as he and Das had fashioned it, was at stake; his resolve is reflected in a letter he wrote to Gandhi: 'I quite agree that the differences which have arisen are quite unfortunate—but as a matter of fact they have always been

there, and have only come to the surface. As you know the Marhatta group never took kindly to non-co-operation. They were compelled to join the movement by the pressure of public opinion. The same causes led them to join the Swaraj Party without believing in its principles... I am going to put it to them quite plainly that I can under no circumstances agree to make it permissible to take minister-ships and executive councillorships by any member of the Swaraj Party—"Responsive Co-operation" is a mere camouflage for taking these offices... If [they do not agree], there is nothing for it but an open fight. We have been living on patched-up compromises too long... The Cawnpore Congress will settle the question.'

The Cawnpore Congress witnessed a tug-of-war between the rival ideologies within the Swaraj Party. The Responsivists, Jayakar, Kelkar, Moonje and Aney, were supported by Malaviya; they asked for the same freedom of action within the Swaraj Party as Motilal and Das had claimed within the Congress during the years 1922-3. They appealed to Gandhi. The Mahatma preferred to be a 'neutral' and 'peace-maker', but his closest adherents supported Motilal at Cawnpore. 'The more I study the councils' work,' Gandhi wrote, 'the effect of [the Swarajist] entry into the councils upon public life [and] its repercussions upon the Hindu-Muslim question, the more convinced I am not only of the futility but the inadvisability of the council-entry... I would welcome the day when at least a few of the comrades of 1920 leave the councils to their fate.'

The day to which Gandhi was looking forward was to be hastened by the fissures within the Swaraj Party. One of the consequences of the Responsivist revolt was to make the official programme of the Swaraj Party more militant. Motilal realized that the only way of preventing the slide

downhill was to resume the climb uphill. If the Swaraj Party were to remain the spearhead of the nationalist struggle the drift from non-co-operation to co-operation had to be stopped. At Cawnpore he reiterated his faith in mass civil disobedience, 'the ultimate sanction', and carried a resolution directing the Swarajists to resign their seats in the legislatures if the Government failed to respond to the 'national demand' for responsible self-government.

In accordance with the mandate of the Cawnpore Congress the Swaraj Party walked out of the Legislative Assembly on March 8, 1926. On this occasion Motilal delivered a memorable speech in which he recalled his resolution of February 8, 1924. That resolution was, he said, a message to the people of the United Kingdom which had gone unheeded. 'We know the great power that this Government wields. We know that in the present state of the country, rent as it is by communal discord and dissension, civil disobedience, our only possible weapon, is not available to us at present. But we know also that it is equally unavailing to remain in this legislature and in the other legislatures of the country any longer. We go out today, not with the object of overthrowing this mighty Empire. We know we cannot do it even if we wished it. We go out in all humility, with the confession of our failure to achieve our objects in this House on our lips.'

The 'walk-out' earned banner headlines in the nationalist press, but it could not stop the rot that Tambe had started within the party. The C.P. Swarajists had been joined by Malaviya and Lajpat Rai. Motilal summoned the dissidents to a conference at Gandhi's *ashram* at Sabar-mati in the last week of April. An agreement was reached, but remained a dead letter. Another attempt at a *rap-prochement* was made by Sarojini Naidu at Simla, but it shared the same fate. It soon became apparent that the

differences between the two wings of the party were not confined to the constitutional issue. 'The angle of vision,' Lajpat Rai wrote to Motilal, 'with which we look upon questions relating to matters on which the Hindus and the Muslims differ is entirely different.' With the elections in the offing, the appeal to religion was a crude but serviceable hook for catching votes. Motilal was accused of bartering away the interests of his own community. In fact, his agnosticism placed him above the storms of religious passion. He had no patience with fanaticism, whether it was of the Hindu or the Muslim vintage. Of the latter he had a bitter taste when he visited Delhi in April 1926, to confer with Maulana Mohammed Ali and other Muslim leaders.

Motilal to Gandhi, April 28, 1926 : '...while I was there, the conversation was more or less desultory interspersed with a few acrimonious passages-at-arms between Mohammed Ali and me. All Hindu Congressmen, with the exception of yourself, Jawahar and me were condemned as open enemies of Muslims... On the other hand it was claimed that not a single Khilafatist of standing had ever deviated from the strict principle of nationalism. ...I am sorry I was unable to agree either in the sweeping condemnation of all Hindu Congressmen or in the general commendation of all Khilafatists, and it was in this connection that some heat was imported in the discussion ...'

Since the basis of the franchise was communal, communalism reached a peak in 1926, the election year. Faced with fanaticism on both sides, Motilal reaffirmed his own secular faith. Jointly with Abul Kalam Azad, who was to play an important role in Congress politics during the next thirty years, he issued on July 31, 1926, the manifesto of 'The Indian National Union' which was to be open to all Indians 'not under the age of eighteen', who accepted the

principles of religious liberty, absolute tolerance of the views and practices of others, and 'adjustment of communal relations on the basis of strict legal rights of communities and individuals'. 'I do hereby solemnly affirm', ran the pledge of membership, 'that the only way to India's lasting prosperity and freedom lies in realization by all communities in India of a common united nationality and harmonious co-operation between them... My sole objective shall be the good of the nation as a whole...'

The Indian National Union received the support of a number of eminent Indians of all creeds and shades of opinion, including Sapru, Sastri, Ajmal Khan, Maharaja of Mahmudabad, Ansari, and Sarojini Naidu. But it failed to make an impression on the communal leaders or on the masses. The aims of the Union were wholly unexceptionable; that they needed to be restated at all was a melancholy commentary on the politics of that period, charged as they were 'with artificially produced, deliberately sustained, tensions—communal, internecine, personal and all sorts'¹. These tensions put the Swaraj Party at a disadvantage in the electoral fight. It did rather well in Madras, Bengal and Assam, not so well in Bombay and the Central Provinces, badly in the Punjab; but in the United Provinces it suffered a rout. Motilal later described the election as a fight 'between the forces of nationalism and a low order of communalism reinforced by wealth, wholesale corruption, terrorism and falsehood'.

'Pandit Motilal is a solitary figure,' a friend wrote to Jawaharlal, who was in Switzerland at that time, 'with the whole of educated India against him, but he is a giant of a man and fights boldly and chivalrously.'² Motilal's own nephew Shamlal Nehru was working against him; the com-

1 Sarojini Naidu to Jawaharlal, October 15, 1926.

2 Sri Prakasa to Jawaharlal, November 26, 1926.

munal tide had swept away old colleagues and trusted workers and left him high and dry. He was shocked at the vulgarity and vehemence of his opponents, who accused him of being anti-Hindu, of plotting to legalize cow-slaughter, and even of intriguing with Kabul. It was difficult to believe that colleagues and friends of yesterday could be so factious, so bitter, so unfair.

The elections left him disillusioned and disgusted. The Swaraj Party was still the largest party in the country's legislatures, but its strength and moral fibre had perceptibly weakened. The 'Indian National Union' had proved still-born. To Motilal, the political landscape appeared so grim that he seriously thought of announcing his resignation at the annual Congress session to be held in Assam at the end of December.

On the way to Gauhati his spirits revived. He travelled by a small river steamer which cruised slowly down the Ganges and the Brahmaputra. His only companions were Upadhyaya his secretary, and Hari his personal servant. His only regret was that he had no rifle with him with which to do a little shooting as the steamer passed along the Sunderbans. The voyage and the solitude and scenery of the Sunderbans helped to relax the accumulated tension of the election weeks. He was already talking of 'returning vigour'.

He had expected another trial of strength with the dissidents at Gauhati, believing that Lajpat Rai and Malaviya, 'aided by Birla's money', were trying to capture the Congress. These fears proved groundless. At Gauhati all was plain sailing for Motilal. This was partly due to the presence and support of Gandhi, whom he had persuaded to attend, and partly to the failure of the Responsivists to muster their forces. Lajpat Rai, Jayakar and Kelkar were absent; Aney and Moonje were present but passive. Mala-

viya's pleas for the acceptance of office had no effect. The original Swarajist programme as advocated by Motilal was confirmed. 'We have stood firm', he told his son triumphantly 'against all reactionaries and carried everything we wanted by overwhelming majorities'.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

END OF THE TETHER

In January 1927, when the newly-elected Legislative Assembly met at Delhi, Motilal discovered that the ratification of his programme by the Gauhati Congress had not ended his difficulties within the party. Only three years had passed since he had embarked on his legislative career, but he no longer felt the optimism he had felt in January 1924, when C. R. Das was alive, public interest at a high pitch, the press favourable, the Swaraj Party well-knit, when the support of other parties was forthcoming and the bureaucracy was momentarily bewildered. By 1927 the political kaleidoscope had violently shifted. C. R. Das was dead, the Swaraj Party had suffered a deep schism; the united front of progressive elements in the Legislative Assembly had disintegrated; old colleagues and comrades turned against Motilal and the elections had left a bitter taste in his mouth. He had not yet drained the cup of ingratitude and disloyalty to the full. Tortuous intrigues in the Swaraj Party came to light early in 1927. C. S. Ranga Iyer, the journalist whom Motilal had employed on the staff of the *Independent* and then brought into the Legislative Assembly, was in open revolt, with the surreptitious backing of Srinivas Iyengar, the deputy leader of the Swaraj Party and President of the Congress.

Motilal to Jawaharlal, March 24, 1927 : 'We are practically at the end of the Assembly session, but it is difficult to say whether I shall continue to be a member up to the moment it is prorogued... The only alternatives before me

are either to put down the spirit of rebellion with an iron hand or to retire. I think the latter is the better course, but I have not definitely made up my mind . . .'

But the letter continues with characteristic cheerfulness :

'Even with these worries, I have carried on very well—looking younger and younger as I am getting older and older (so say the New Delhi ladies).'

To Kamala, his daughter-in-law, who was slowly convalescing in a sanatorium in Switzerland, he wrote :

'I feel as strong as a horse in spite of all I have gone through. Many European members of the Assembly come and ask me to divulge the secret of health, which, they are sure, I have discovered. I wish I had, as in that case I would first impart it to you.'

Rarely had the political outlook been bleaker in India than at the beginning of 1927. Communal antagonisms, factional rivalries and personal animosities seemed to have submerged basic issues. Even during these lean years when the Mahatma had retired from active politics, nothing important in the Congress was done without his advice. He was the keeper of the consciences of politicians who were at loggerheads with one another. This was a fortunate circumstance for Motilal, who could always bank upon Gandhi's advice and assistance in a crisis. His opponents did not fail to notice his special relationship with Gandhi. During the fierce controversies of 1926, Jayakar bluntly asked Gandhi whether it was not a fact that Motilal counted for more with him than he (Jayakar) did. 'I do not know,' replied Gandhi, 'if it is true in any sense, I can only say that it is a human failing which I have not yet overcome because I am unconscious of it.'¹ Whether he was conscious of it or not, Gandhi never failed to support the elder Nehru

¹Gandhi to Jayakar, August 1, 1926.

in a crisis; and but for this support, Motilal might have thrown in his hand during the years 1925-7 when nationalist politics passed through a particularly disheartening phase. As it was, he felt deeply despondent about the future of his party and country. His mood is mirrored in a letter he wrote to Gandhi on May 6, 1927, his sixty-sixth birthday :

‘By the way, I have entered upon my 67th year today and Sarup [Vijayalakshmi] is celebrating the event by inviting a number of people this afternoon to tea. Looking back through the vista of 66 long years it presents to myself an almost unbroken record of time wasted and opportunities missed. It is depressing to think of little, if any, output of all these years, and of the less that can be reasonably expected within the brief span still left to me...I have already begun the process of ‘slipping out’ of the Assembly. During the last session I kept in the background as far as possible. When the next session comes round in September, I shall most probably be in Europe. It will be open to the Governor-General to declare my seat vacant, but I am afraid he will not. In that case...I shall occupy myself outside in the best way I can...’

Now, when he thought that his innings was drawing to a close, his thoughts turned often to his son, to whom he wrote when the new Assembly met in Delhi.

Motilal to Jawaharlal, January 27, 1927 : ‘...I wish first of all to tell you what has since the opening of the Assembly forced itself upon me many a time. We have among the members two men who were your contemporaries at Cambridge (Mackworth Young and Ruthnaswamy). The former is the Secretary to the Government in the Military Department, and the latter a nominated non-official. What I feel on seeing these men is that you should have been in my place. This would have been more in the fitness of

things than my being there. I don't know why this idea recurs to me repeatedly on seeing your contemporaries.'

In the summer of 1927 there were informal discussions among Congress leaders on the choice of the president for the ensuing session which was to be held in Madras in December. A Royal Commission was expected to be appointed, and 1928 promised to be an eventful, perhaps a crucial year. At the instance of Jinnah and the Maharaja of Mahmudabad, Sarojini Naidu suggested that Motilal should preside over the Madras Congress. She sought Gandhi's support for her proposal. 'There are too many forces just now working against Motilalji,' Gandhi told her. Motilal himself declined the offer, but in a letter to Gandhi suggested Jawaharlal for 'the crown' as the Congress presidency was described in Congress circles. 'Jawaharlal presiding has an irresistible appeal for me,' Gandhi wrote back, 'but I wonder whether it would be proper in the present atmosphere to saddle the responsibility on him.'

The Mahatma sounded young Nehru, who was in Switzerland at the time. Jawaharlal did not feel—or at least did not show—much enthusiasm for the proposal. Meanwhile, both his father and the Mahatma had agreed that the time had not yet come for him to take command. The choice finally fell on Dr. M. A. Ansari.

If Motilal felt any embarrassment in sponsoring his son's candidature for the Congress presidency, he did not betray it. He could of course write in complete confidence to Gandhi, in whose heart there was a special place for Jawaharlal. But he was careful to keep the issue on a public rather than a private plane :

'You have put it very well to Jawahar to say whether he wishes the "crown" to be put on his head. His own letters, which to my mind, breathed an unshakable faith not only in the ultimate victory against the forces of reaction, but

also in our present capacity to put up a strong fight, suggested the idea to me and I forthwith communicated it to you. His reply to you will show the extent to which he is confident himself.' Motilal concluded : 'My only fear is that the habit of playing the role of the humble soldier in the presence of his great general may check the necessary assertiveness required for the occasion.'

Having reached a dead-end in national politics, Motilal decided to take his long-deferred holiday in Europe. His plans for going abroad with the sub-committee of the Skeen Committee in March 1926, had fallen through. Nor did he feel free, with the chaos in the party and the country, to leave India in 1926. Early in 1927 he was eager to re-join his son in Switzerland, but there were two obstacles. One was the progress of the new house which he was building in the compound of Anand Bhawan. For many years Motilal had felt that Anand Bhawan was too large for his family, particularly after his nephews had set up on their own. With the cessation of his practice and the change in his style of living which had followed his plunge into the non-co-operation movement, Anand Bhawan seemed more and more of a white elephant. But it was not easy for him to do anything in a small way; eventually the new house turned out to be more compact than small. He took a keen interest in the design and construction, but he was too preoccupied with professional and political affairs to supervise the work; and the local engineers had not much experience of modern sanitary and electrical installations. After a good deal of wasteful experiment, an engineer was sent for from the Tatas, and the work had to be done over again. The result was that in June 1927, when the house should have been receiving the finishing touches, holes were being knocked in walls and ceilings and the floors and verandas dug out.

The second hurdle which barred the way to Europe was financial. Motilal's legal practice since his release from gaol had been a sporadic affair. What with demands of his family and party, he had long since run through his savings. The new house proved a serious drain on his resources. In 1927, when politics began to stink in his nostrils, he was devoting greater attention to his profession. But legal practice at the age of sixty-six was a strenuous affair. A fortnight's pleading in an election case at Farrukhabad in June left him 'more dead than alive', and the offer of Rs. 2,000 a day for the next fortnight in Lucknow failed to tempt him. He came back to Allahabad to rest, but there was no rest for him. He had to drive himself to the limit if he were to meet his immediate liabilities and find the wherewithal for the European trip. The empty till was to be replenished by the Lakhana case.

As we have already seen,¹ the District Judge had decided the case in 1918 in favour of Rani Kishori. The appeal against this decision came up before the Allahabad High Court in 1921. During these three years, the fortunes of the opposing counsel had undergone a remarkable metamorphosis. Tej Bahadur Sapru had become the Law Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council. Motilal had renounced his practice at the Bar, but decided to make an exception of this case; his reappearance at the High Court was a memorable event. In his homespun *sherwani* he presented a different, though not less formidable, figure than he had done in his Savile Row suit.

More than three decades had passed since the Lakhana case had come to Motilal. In its long and tortuous course it had brought him some headaches, but it had also brought him high fees. In the concluding phase of the case he

¹Supra, p. 29.

received nearly Rs. 152,000. 'The expenses for my trip to Europe,' he told his son, 'must come out of the fees for the work in Europe.'

Apart from the Lakhana case, he had other reasons for not delaying his departure for Europe. In February Jawaharlal had attended the Congress of Oppressed Nationalities at Brussels and sent home some photographs. 'I have never seen worse photographs,' was Motilal's comment, 'but perhaps they suit the occasion, as you are the very picture of the representative of an oppressed country.' Incomparably superior to these photographs was a likeness of Jawaharlal in a Berlin journal, but it had the wrong caption: 'Barkatullah of *Ghadr* Party'. 'I know,' Motilal added, 'that Barkatullah is wanted by the police of various countries and am living in hopes that we shall not hear of a case of mistaken identity in the near future.'

Motilal's banter concealed a real concern for the safety of his son. Sir Alexander Muddiman, the Home Member, with whom Motilal was socially, if not politically, on the best of terms, had recently met him at a dinner, and thrown hints that the Government was keeping track of young Nehru's doings in Europe. Motilal at once took Gandhi into confidence.

Motilal to Gandhi, May 6, 1927: '...I am afraid he has attracted too much attention of the India Office and things may not prove to be quite pleasant to him and to us. Muddiman has already hinted at it. He said: "Jawahar was sailing too near the wind". I replied that there was nothing strange in it—and in fact it was the business of both father and son to do so. We laughed it away, but he added significantly: "He has been to Berlin and met some people who are not of the right sort." "How can you help meeting people of all sorts when they come your way?" was my answer.

'He [Jawaharlal] says he has himself noticed that he has of late been the object of attention on the part of the British Secret Service which, he says, is the most perfect on the continent. One of the reasons for my intended trip to Europe is to escort the young gentleman safely home.'

Motilal sailed at the end of August for Venice, where he was received by Jawaharlal. Fortunately, Kamala was well enough to move about, and during the next three months the family (except for Indira who was in school in Switzerland) travelled together in Italy, France, Britain, Germany and Russia. The Nehrus took the most expensive suites in the best hotels. Motilal's presence gave the tour the real flavour of an aristocratic holiday. 'Wherever we stayed with Father,' writes Krishna, 'we were treated right royally. No sooner did we arrive at a hotel than the manager sent flowers with his compliments. He then came himself to see that we were comfortable. Everyone hovered around us all the time.'¹ Motilal himself seemed to have finished with politics. He was in high good humour. Once when the rest of the family was in Paris, he went to a well-known firm of drapers in London to buy a coat for his daughter. Not having the exact measurements with him, he suggested to the manager to have a few shop girls—about 5 feet 2 inches in height—lined up in order to enable him to select the right size. It was a most unusual request, but the manager was either so flabbergasted or awed by the peremptory manner of the customer that he did as he was told.

Early in November the Nehrus were in Berlin and from there paid a brief visit to Moscow. In December Jawaharlal, Kamala, Indira and Krishna sailed for India *via* Colombo

¹Hutheesing, Krishna, *With No Regrets*, p. 46.

and arrived at Madras just in time for the Congress session during Christmas.

Motilal decided to remain in Europe for a few months more. In January he was in Monte Carlo, which he described as 'the most charming little place that I have seen. You seem moving about in a huge picture laid at your feet'. He visited the Casino thrice, won and lost 'with the net result of some Fr. 2,000 to the good', but found it 'a disgusting affair'. What he enjoyed most was motoring to Nice, Menton and San Remo.

The holiday mood was shattered when a medical check-up revealed traces of albumin, and of glaucoma 'implying stone blindness sooner or later'. It was an unduly alarming diagnosis, but Motilal read into it 'the beginning of the end'. 'I feel,' he wrote to his son (January 4, 1928), 'I will be happier in the old familiar surroundings and I have accordingly made up my mind to leave Europe as early as I can.' A month later he was back in India.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

RISING TEMPO

'My only hope,' Gandhi wrote in May 1927, when the political horizon seemed darkest, 'lies in prayer and answer to prayer.' Strange are the ways of Providence : it chose Birkenhead, the Conservative Secretary of State for India, as its instrument for the welcome change in Indian politics. If there were two things in the world on which Birkenhead had no doubt, they were the permanence of Indian discord and the permanence of British rule in India.

Birkenhead was in no hurry to prepare the next instalment of constitutional reform. But he had to reckon with the clause in the Indian Reforms Act of 1919 which had prescribed an inquiry into the working of the constitution after ten years. The appointment of a Royal Commission was not due until 1929, but it seemed to Birkenhead 'elementary prudence' not to run the risk of its nomination by a Labour Government. 'You can readily imagine,' he told the Viceroy, 'what kind of a commission in its personnel would have been appointed by Colonel Wedgwood and his friends.'¹ The Act of 1919 was accordingly amended so as to permit the appointment of the Commission two years ahead of the schedule.

The chairman of the commission was Sir John Simon, an eminent lawyer and a Liberal politician; of its other six members, the only one now remembered is Clement Attlee, the future Prime Minister of England who was then a Labour back-bencher in the House of Commons.

¹Earl of Birkenhead, F. E. *Life of F. E. Smith, the first Earl of Birkenhead*, pp. 511-2.

The announcement of an all-white Royal Commission in November 1927, deeply hurt Indian opinion, which came to look upon it as an inquisition by foreigners into India's fitness for self-government. 'Not since the Ilbert Bill,' writes the historian of Irwin's Viceroyalty, 'had racial feelings been stirred so deeply.'² The Indian National Congress decided to boycott the commission, 'at every stage and in every form'. Even Moderate and Muslim elements, whose co-operation Birkenhead had taken for granted, joined in the boycott.

Motilal was in England when the announcement was made. 'The only honest course', he remarked, 'is to declare what Government wants to do and then to appoint a commission to draft a scheme giving effect to that declaration.' He elaborated his views in a speech in the Legislative Assembly on February 18, 1928, soon after his return from Europe. The occasion was Lajpat Rai's famous resolution calling for a boycott of the Simon Commission. 'I have the honour,' Motilal said, 'of knowing Sir John Simon personally, of working with him. I have myself described him as a very big man...but...the biggest thing that he, as an Englishman and as an Imperialist, quite apart from being a lawyer of great eminence, is capable of doing is bound to be the smallest possible thing from our point of view.' He could not (he continued) advise his countrymen to surrender their right of self-determination to the biggest man in the world. He affirmed the principle 'that the British Parliament, the British Public and the British Government have no shadow of a right to force a constitution upon us against our own will'. The Madras Congress had defined the goal of the Indian people as 'complete independence', but the Congress was prepared to confer with 'all the other

²Gopal S., *The Viceroyalty of Lord Irwin, 1926-31*, p. 21.

parties concerned, including the Government' as to the kind of constitution which was to be framed, the length of the 'transitional' period and the arrangements suitable for that period. Motilal made a pointed reference to Birkenhead's 'exhibitions of temper'. 'It is easy to reply in the same strain, but I shall resist the temptation, and will only remark that heads that are swollen contain little wisdom and pride always rides for a fall.'

He concluded his speech on a minatory note : 'Governments which have not paid attention to the lessons of history have invariably come to grief, to an ignominious end, and I have no doubt that what has not been accomplished by the statesmanship of England will be accomplished by destiny, and destiny and the people of India will add one more to the long list of fallen Empires.'

By providing a common grievance, the Simon Commission brought together parties and politicians who were poles apart. The Congress, the National Liberal Federation, the Jinnah wing of the Muslim League, all spoke with one voice. The bitter feuds of 1926-7 were forgotten; Malaviya, Lajpat Rai, Jayakar and Motilal presented an unbroken front to the Government. The boycott resolution passed through the Legislative Assembly by sixty-eight votes to sixty-two.

Sir John Simon and his colleagues were subjected to social as well as political boycott. A number of Indian legislators, who were staying in the Western Court at New Delhi, where the 'Simon Seven' were also accommodated, cut the Commissioners dead. The boycott movement was intensified when the Commission paid its second visit to India later in the year. The railway track was patrolled and the most rigorous precautions were taken. 'It is a strange comment upon the democratic spirit of friendliness which should inspire the relationship today between Great

Britain and India,' wrote the *Pioneer*, 'that the Enquiry Committee of the Mother of Parliaments should be smuggled ashore by zealous policemen and shepherded by unimaginative officialdom.'

On October 30th, when the Simon Commission arrived at Lahore, the police beat up a crowd which was demonstrating in front of the railway station. Lajpat Rai, the most popular leader of the province, received two blows on his chest. His death on November 17th, which sent a wave of humiliation and indignation through the country, had the result on the one hand of intensifying the boycott and on the other of hardening the official attitude towards the demonstrators. It was during the visit of the Simon Commission to Lucknow that Jawaharlal felt for the first time baton blows on his back. Fearing that press reports of the assault next morning might alarm his family, he telephoned his father and told him not to worry. Motilal was not so easily reassured; he could not sleep and, late at night, when the last train had already gone, decided to leave for Lucknow by road. The motor car broke down on the way and he arrived at Lucknow early in the morning of November 30th, just when Jawaharlal, in spite of his injuries, was ready to leave for the railway station for the great demonstration which had been planned to greet the Simon Commission on its arrival. There was another assault by the mounted police; Jawaharlal received more baton blows, but was fortunately carried off to safety by some Congress volunteers.

Motilal was distressed when he saw his son's injuries. A touching letter came from Gandhi.

'My dear Jawahar,' he wrote, 'my love to you. It was all done bravely. You have braver things to do. May God spare you for many a long year to come, and make you

His chosen instrument for freeing India from the yoke.'¹

While the Simon Commission continued what Gandhi called its 'blood-red progress',² Indian political leaders were busy with the 'constructive side of the boycott'. A challenge from Birkenhead had stung them to frame an agreed constitution :

'I have twice in three years, during which I have been Secretary of State, invited our critics in India to put forward their own suggestions for a constitution to indicate to us the form, in which in their judgment any reform of constitution may take place. That offer is still open.'

The Madras Congress had directed the Congress working Committee to draft a 'Swaraj' Constitution in consultation with other parties. In February 1928, an All Parties Conference met in Delhi with Dr. Ansari, the Congress president, in the chair, and voted for 'full responsible government'. At its Bombay meeting in May, it appointed a sub-committee to determine the principles of an Indian constitution. The sub-committee was presided over by Motilal and included Sir Ali Imam and Shuaib Qureshi (Muslims), Aney and Jayakar (Hindu Mahasabha), Mangal Singh (The Sikh League), Tej Bahadur Sapru (Liberals), N. M. Joshi (Labour), G. R. Pradhan (Non-Brahmins). Jawaharlal, who was the General Secretary of the All India Congress Committee, also acted as the Secretary of the Constitution-making Committee, which came to be known as the Nehru Committee.

The Nehru Committee had to find an answer to the sinister question which was to shadow Indian politics for the next twenty years: the position of the minorities, and especially of the Muslim minority, in a free and democratic India. If British autocracy was to be replaced by an Indian

¹Gandhi to Jawaharlal, December 3, 1928.

²*Young India*, December 6, 1928.

democracy, would it give a permanent advantage to the Hindus, who heavily outnumbered the Muslims? Was it, as Sir Syed Ahmed had put it, a game of dice in which one man had four dice, and the other only one?

One method of protecting Muslim interests was to incorporate special provisions or 'safeguards' in the constitution. One of the safeguards was the institution of separate electorates, the election of Muslim candidates by Muslim voters, which was first introduced in the Minto-Morley Reforms. In 1909, J. Ramsay MacDonald, then a Labour Member of British Parliament, wrote after a visit to India :

'The Council Act has come, and the Mohammedan has received preferential treatment. The flags are flying over the Mohammedan camp; not a square inch of bunting flies over the Hindu's head.'¹

Ten years later the 'preferential treatment' was extended by the Reforms Act of 1919 even though its authors acknowledged that 'division by creeds and classes means the creation of political camps organized against each other, and teaches men to think as partisans and not as citizens'.

The Lucknow Pact of 1916 between the Muslim League and the Congress committed the latter to separate electorates. Unfortunately, communal claims had an inconvenient habit of growing. By 1928 Muslim demands embraced 'communal provinces' as well as 'communal electorates', guarantees of Muslim majorities in the Punjab and Bengal, 'weightage' for Muslim minorities in other provinces, reservation of one-third of the seats in the central legislature and the posts under the Government. The memorandum of the Ahmediya community to the Hartog Committee went so far as to ask for special schools employing

¹MacDonald, J. Ramsay, *The Awakening of India*, p. 60.

Muslim teachers for Muslim students! The communal climate of the twenties encouraged a fantastic political arithmetic of percentages of seats and jobs, which baffled the Nehru Committee as soon as it set to work. Of the difficulties of the Committee we have a first-hand version in a letter written by Ansari, the Congress president, to Gandhi, dated June 28th, 1928 :

‘When I reached Allahabad there was a complete deadlock [in the Nehru Committee]. The Sikhs would have no reservation of seats at all anywhere, neither for the majority nor for the minority. The [Hindu] Mahasabha people would allow reservation for the minorities, but none for the majorities. The Congress and Muslim proposal was for a reservation of seats both for the majorities and the minorities. I tried in private discussion with different people to come to a common formula...’

The common formula stipulated for a Declaration of Fundamental Rights assuring every citizen the fullest liberty of conscience, belief and culture, and for a reservation of seats in legislatures under joint electorates. The Muslim demand for constituting North West Frontier Province and Sind into separate provinces was conceded on the basis of ‘cultural’ autonomy, which was also held to justify a Kanarese-speaking province in southern India. The committee expressed the hope that in a free India political parties would follow political and economic rather than religious alignments. The committee framed its constitution on the basis of Dominion Status, ‘not as a remote stage of our evolution, but as the next immediate step’.

The constitution was drafted by Motilal with the help of his son, before Tej Bahadur Sapru took a hand. ‘Tej Bahadur is very pleased with the draft report,’ Motilal wrote to Jawaharlal on July 21, 1928. ‘In the sixty pages of typed matter he had only six or seven verbal changes to suggest

and said it was "A-I". He is now writing a few paragraphs on Indian States, Dominion Status versus Responsible Government.'

The Nehru Report offered not a constitution, but the outline of a constitution, which could be amplified and put into the form of a bill by a parliamentary draftsman. Among its important recommendations, which were to find their way into the constitution of independent India, were a declaration of rights, a parliamentary system of government, a bicameral legislature, adult franchise, allocation of subjects between the centre and the provinces, redistribution of provincial boundaries on a linguistic basis, and an independent judiciary with a Supreme Court at its apex.

Much hard work and heart-searching went into the report. It was not easy to secure a consensus of opinion in a committee whose members diverged widely in their views and aspirations. The committee tried to reconcile the conflicting communal claims and to find a *via media* between the radicalism of the National Congress and the conservatism of the Indian Liberals. The significance of an agreed constitution was quickly recognized. 'The day of bondage is ending,' Mrs. Besant declared, 'and the dawn of freedom is on the Eastern horizon.' Dr. Ansari recalled the 'years of utter darkness in which the spectre of communal differences oppressed us like a terrible nightmare', and was glad that the work of the Nehru Committee had 'at last heralded the dawn of a brighter day.' 'It is an achievement,' Motilal himself said in December 1928, 'of which any country in the world might well be proud.'

All this optimism was a little premature. The constitution had been accepted 'in principle' by the All Parties Conference in Lucknow at the end of August, but there were a number of mutually contradictory amendments, which were referred back to the Nehru Committee for considera-

tion. The committee, which was enlarged by the appointment of additional members, including Mrs. Besant, Malaviya and Lajpat Rai, issued a supplementary report, which was submitted for approval to an All Parties Convention at Calcutta during the Christmas week. It soon became obvious that communal claims had no fixity. No sooner was an issue closed than it was sought to be reopened. 'I see,' Gandhi wrote to Motilal in November, 'you are having no end of difficulties with Mussalman friends regarding your report. But I see you are unravelling the tangle with consummate patience and tact.' But not all Motilal's patience and tact could unravel the communal tangle, particularly as the British Government was an invisible third party in possession of the cake the two communities pretended to divide. The communal politicians had one eye on the Nehru Committee and the other on the Simon Commission which was then touring India. The dilemma was described by Motilal in December 1928: 'It is difficult to stand against the foreigner without offering him a united front. It is not easy to offer him a united front while the foreigner is in our midst domineering over us.'

At the All India Convention in Calcutta which was one of the most representative gatherings of its kind, efforts were made to reopen the communal issue. 'We admit,' Motilal argued, 'that there are in this report recommendations which perhaps we ourselves might not have made individually [but they] are likely to bring about unanimity and harmony between the parties.' The report, he pleaded, was a 'structure. If you pull out one brick, it is likely to crumble'. These pleas had no effect on a vocal Muslim section led by Jinnah, who soon afterwards lined up with the reactionary part of the Muslim League (led by the Aga Khan) and the Ali Brothers to denounce the Nehru Report. The issues on which the breach occurred at the Calcutta Convention

were separate electorates, reservation of one-third of the seats in the central legislature, and the vesting of residuary powers in the Provinces.¹ These were modest demands—compared with those of ten years later. It is, however, difficult to say whether their acceptance in 1928-9 would have halted the crescendo of communal claims which culminated in the demand for Pakistan. The narrowness and rigidity of the Hindu and Sikh politicians in these negotiations was bad enough, but the fluidity of Muslim demands was worse. From 1906 to 1947, each communal 'settlement' became the starting point for a harder bargain, until nothing was left to bargain about.

Motilal himself was prepared to go very far in writing safeguards for the minorities into the constitution, but he felt a line had to be drawn somewhere so that the growth of a common citizenship and national spirit were not permanently stunted. This is why he opposed separate electorates. The rejection of Jinnah's demands by the Calcutta Convention in December 1928, has been described as a turning point in his career,² away from nationalism towards Muslim separatism. But it would have been impossible to find, then or later, two Hindu leaders who were freer from communal prejudice or could take a more rational and sympathetic view of the place of the Muslim minority in a democratic India than Motilal Nehru and Sapru, the joint authors of the Nehru Report.

Motilal's own views on the place of religion in politics were stated bluntly at the Calcutta Congress.

'Whatever the higher conception of religion may be, it has in our day-to-day life come to signify bigotry and fanaticism, intolerance and narrow-mindedness. . . Not content

¹The Proceedings of the All Parties Convention, p. 95.

²Bolitho, Hector, Jinnah, p. 95.

with its reactionary influence on social matters it has invaded the domain of politics and economics... Its association with politics has been to the good of neither. Religion has been degraded and politics has sunk into the mire. Complete divorce of the one from the other is the only remedy.'

As 1928 drew to a close, the Nehru Report was running into difficulties created by the supporters of communal claims. But Motilal was no less worried by the opposition from a radical wing of Congressmen led by Jawaharlal. The clash between father and son is important not only in itself but for the profound influence it was to exercise on the course of the national movement.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

THE CLASH

'His Excellency desires,' Home Secretary Haig wrote on October 18, 1928, 'that the utterances of Jawaharlal Nehru should be watched carefully.' It was not only the Viceroy who had reasons to be perturbed by the activities of young Nehru. In Christmas week of 1927, soon after his return from Europe, he had presided over a 'Republican Conference' and carried through the Madras Congress a bunch of resolutions with an aggressively anti-imperialist and pro-socialist slant. One of the resolutions described 'complete national independence' as the goal of the Indian people; another denounced in advance any 'warlike adventure', in which the British might be involved for the furtherance of their imperialist aims. Gandhi was present at the Madras Congress; though he did not attend all its meetings, he kept a vigilant eye on what was happening. He was scandalized by what seemed to him an utter lack of restraint in Jawaharlal's activities and speeches after his long absence from India. 'You are going too fast,' he wrote on January 4, 1928, 'you should have taken time to think and become acclimatized.' Jawaharlal tried to explain, but that made matters worse. 'The differences between us,' wrote Gandhi, 'are so vast and radical that there seems to be no meeting ground between us.'

The European visit had given a sharp edge to Jawaharlal's politics which prevented them from sliding smoothly into the well-worn grooves of the Congress. Early in 1926, when Jawaharlal sailed from Bombay, India had seemed to him 'still quiescent, passive, perhaps not fully recovered

from the effort of 1919-1922'; on his return in December, 1927, he found her 'fresh, active and full of suppressed energy'. Almost every sector of society, the urban intelligentsia, the young people, the industrial workers, the peasantry showed signs of awakening. The sharp reaction to the appointment of the Simon Commission revealed the increased sensitivity of the intelligentsia. Youth Leagues were springing up all over the country and students' conferences demanded radical solutions for political and economic ills. The Communist Party was active in important industrial centres. A spate of strikes affected steel and tinplate works at Jamshedpur, jute mills in Calcutta, cotton mills in Sholapur, woollen mills in Kanpur and the railways in southern and eastern India. The strike in Bombay cloth mills embracing 60,000 workers lasted for more than five months. It has been estimated that nearly half a million workers were involved in these strikes and thirty-one million working days were lost.¹ Even the long-suffering peasantry was astir in 1928, showing the latent energy which was waiting to be harnessed to the national cause.

With this new mood of the country Jawaharlal was in harmony; his tours and speeches helped to crystallize it, even though they alarmed the more sedate sections in and outside the Congress. He was invited to preside over numerous conferences of students, peasants and workers in all parts of the country. In his speeches and writings he made frontal attacks on feudalism, capitalism and imperialism. He advocated a 'revolutionary outlook' questioned age-old assumptions and suggested root-and-branch solutions. His position as General Secretary of the Congress—an office into which he had stepped back in December, 1927—did not appear to hamper him. He helped his father in collecting

¹Dutt, R. Palme, *India Today*, p. 337.

and sorting data for the Nehru Report and even in drafting it, but he did not see eye to eye with him on the fundamental postulate of the new constitution, that it should be based on Dominion Status.

Motilal recognized that in a negotiated settlement there was bound to be a transitional period for which special arrangements by mutual consent would be necessary. He knew that Dominion Status was not to be despised. He had referred to it in the Swaraj Party's manifesto in 1923; he had put it forward as the united demand of the non-official groups in the Legislature Assembly in February 1924, and September 1925. True, he had not objected to Jawaharlal's advocacy of complete independence at the Brussels Congress in February 1927, and had declared for complete independence in his speech in the Assembly on the boycott of the Simon Commission a year later. But it was one thing to announce the goal of the Congress, another to reconcile it with the views of the numerous parties, big and small, which were represented on the All Parties Conference.

The popular view that in 1928 Motilal stood for Dominion Status, and Jawaharlal for 'complete independence' is an over-simplification. The differences were not so much on the ultimate goal, as on the immediate tactics. Motilal was prepared to accept a compromise so that he could carry his colleagues on the All Parties Committee and give an effective answer to Birkhead's challenge.

The controversy on dominion status versus complete independence created a new obstacle for the Nehru Report. When it came up for approval before the All Parties Conference at Lucknow in August 1928, the younger radical wing led by Jawaharlal and Subhas Bose suggested that the communal pact should be ratified, but the question of 'Dominion Status' versus complete independence should be kept open. The Nehru Report was thus threatened by communal reac-

tionaries on the one hand, and young radicals on the other.

The 'Independence for India League', of which Jawaharlal and Subhas Bose were Secretaries, was no more than a pressure group within the Congress,¹ but it was an unwelcome addition to the numerous and conflicting pressures with which Motilal, as chairman of the constitution-making committee, was already contending. He had been persuaded to agree to preside over the ensuing session of the Congress which was to meet at Calcutta in December 1928, but he made it known that if he did not secure a majority for his report, he would resign. He was in an irritable and combative mood; the fact that his son was leading the opposition to Dominion Status seemed to add to his irritation. 'I do not think', Jawaharlal writes in his autobiography, 'that at any previous or subsequent occasion the tension [between us] had been so great'.

The controversy over Dominion Status only high-lighted intellectual and temperamental differences which had always existed between father and son. These differences had crystallized as early as 1907, when Jawaharlal was in his teens. They had brought on a first-class crisis in 1919 which was resolved only after the entire family had plunged into non-co-operation. During the years 1923-6, father and son were content to follow their independent lines of activity. But in 1928, after Jawaharlal's return from Europe, the intellectual gulf between them was wider than ever.

Motilal's political philosophy was derived from his long association with the Indian National Congress; it had been influenced by Gokhale and Gandhi; it enshrined parliamentary democracy, equality before the law, and freedom from the thralldom of caste and creed.

1. Brecher, Michael, *Jawaharlal Nehru*, p.130.

Proud, fearless and stubborn as he was, Motilal's approach to politics was rational, sceptical, almost cynical. Unlike his son he did not romanticize India's past nor idealize her 'naked hungry-mass'. Forty years at the Bar and in national politics had dispelled such illusions as he may have had; he had seen something of the seamy side of life and knew the weaknesses of his countrymen; he was incapable of following a leader or a dogma blindly. He was suspicious of excessive emotion in politics. After hearing Sarojini Naidu's poetic—and impromptu—presidential address at the Cawnpore Congress in 1925, which moved the audience to tears, his only comment was: 'But what did she say?'

Motilal had visited England, but the England he knew and admired was Victorian England. His mentor was Mill, rather than Marx; his chief driving force was political liberty, not social justice. He had an aristocratic disdain for money, which he had earned and spent with an equal facility, but he did not look askance at the institution of property. To him, as to most of his contemporaries in the Congress and on the All Parties Conference, property was a symbol of status and respectability, a reward for initiative and hard work. The guarantee in the Nehru Report of the vested rights in property to the zamindars of Oudh, which so much shocked Jawaharlal,¹ must have seemed the most natural thing to his father, to Sapru and to other members of the constitution-making committee, who had been nurtured on Anglo-Saxon conceptions of individual liberty.

Jawaharlal inherited his father's pride and fearlessness, but not his caution and circumspection. He was one of those who needed a cause to live and die for. The ecstatic politics of 1919-22 satisfied this craving. But when the

¹Nehru, J., *Autobiography*, p. 173.

curve of popular enthusiasm fell, his faith did not sag. The enforced leisure in gaol gave him time to read and think and to re-charge the battery of his mind. Even as he occupied himself in the dull grind of municipal administration, or the routine of the All India Congress Committee's office, his mind was being continually renewed by fresh reading, a process which received a fillip from his stay in Europe during 1926-7.

A Superintendent of Lucknow Gaol, an English Colonel, once told Jawaharlal that 'he had practically finished his general reading at the age of twelve'. For most of Jawaharlal's colleagues in Indian politics, general reading had ended not at twelve but at twenty-five. Were it not for his reading habit, which had been acquired early and preserved by spells in prison, Jawaharlal's mind might also have been 'frozen'; he would then have been spared troublesome thoughts and the agonies of appraisal and re-appraisal from which most practising politicians are so happily immune. His reading was eclectic, but with a preponderance of history and economics. The image of the past that he acquired and was to project in his historical writings, the *Glimpses of World History* and *The Discovery of India*, did not reek of the dust of the library shelf. It was the fruit of an exciting voyage into time and space, from which he returned with a sharper awareness of the present and an indomitable faith in the future. He tried to balance himself on 'a point of intersection of the timeless with time', and saw India less as a geographical and economic entity, composed of millions of individuals pursuing their separate ambitions, than as a great nation whose spirit, despite the humiliations of the recent past and the melancholy present, was unconquered and unconquerable. This buoyant optimism seemed almost romantic thirty years ago, but it had a heart-warming quality which sustained not only his own faith but that of

millions of his countrymen through the vicissitudes of the national movement. 'There was a time not long ago,' he wrote to his sister in 1931, 'when an Indian had to hang his head in shame in foreign countries... Today it is a proud privilege to be an Indian.'¹ It was perhaps this quality which made Rabindranath Tagore describe Jawaharlal as 'the *Rituraj* representing the season of youth and triumphant joy of an invincible spirit of fight and uncompromising loyalty to the cause of freedom'.²

If history gave a perspective to Jawaharlal's politics, economics gave a practical edge to them. He saw political liberty not as an end in itself, but as the means of a new social and economic order. He was not alone in conceiving political liberty as a prelude to social justice. Gandhi had never ceased to lay stress on the needs of the downtrodden and the under-privileged. Indeed, he claimed to be a socialist. 'But my socialism,' he wrote, 'was natural to me and not adopted from any books. No man could be actively non-violent and not rise against social injustice wherever it occurred.' The Mahatma's social philosophy was yet to go through its own peculiar evolution during the nineteen-thirties in response to the needs of the time. In 1928 it appeared to Jawaharlal, after his recent exposure to Marxist ideas, too vague, too amorphous and inchoate, to form the basis of a political programme.

Father and son, proceeding from different premises, did not find it easy to argue at home. But they did argue in public. The addresses they delivered at the Calcutta and Lahore sessions of the Indian National Congress were in a sense their dialogue, reflecting their differences on the tactics as well as the strategy of the national movement.

¹Hutheesing, Krishna, *With No Regrets*, p. 75.

²J. Nehru, *A Bunch of Old Letters*, p. 173.

Motilal's outlook was that of a trained lawyer and a seasoned politician. 'Pure idealism completely divorced from realities,' he said, 'has no place in politics and is but a happy dream, which must sooner or later end in a rude awakening.' He had, he said, no quarrel with the ideals of the young men: 'I hold with them that all exploitation must cease and all imperialism must go. But the way to it is a long and dreary one... The masses want bread. They have no time for theories and dogmas imported from abroad... The occasion calls for skilful generalship, not academic discussions which take us nowhere.' Dominion status was 'a very considerable measure of freedom bordering on independence'. And independence did not mean 'walking out of the world... Indeed the more independent you are, the more necessary it will be to establish relations all round'. Severance of relations with Britain did not mean a cessation of all relations, but 'such appropriate change in existing relations as is necessary to transform a dependency into a free state'.

This was the voice of experience, of circumspection, of a man who claimed to see 'the world as it is, and not as it should be'. Against this, his son affirmed that 'success often comes to those who dare and act... We play for high stakes and if we seek to achieve great things it can only be through great dangers'. The prospect of revolutionary changes did not appear to disturb young Nehru; on the contrary, it seemed to uplift him. 'We appear to be in a dissolving period of history,' he said, 'when the world is in labour and out of her travail will give birth to a new order.' This was not mere rhetoric. Everyone could see how impatient he was of half-measures, compromises, vague generalities. He was, he said, a socialist and a republican—'no believer in kings or princes, or in the order which produces the modern kings of industry'. The central problem,

he asserted, was the conquest of power : 'the total withdrawal of the army of occupation and British economic control from India'. He questioned the right of the British Parliament to decide the measure and manner of India's progress. India was 'a nation on the march', which no one could thwart. 'If we fail today,' he said, 'and tomorrow brings no success, the day after tomorrow will bring achievement.'

As one reads these words in cold print today, it is difficult to visualize the impact they made thirty years ago, when they fell like burning coals on sedate Indian politicians and indignant British officials. The three-pronged attack on imperialism, capitalism and feudalism was calculated to antagonize at once bureaucrats and businessmen, landlords and princes, to whom young Nehru must have seemed a romantic idealist if not an *enfant terrible* of Indian politics. His economics were no less aggressive than his politics. 'Our economic programme,' he told the Lahore Congress in December 1929, 'must be based on a human outlook, and must not sacrifice men to money. If any industry could not be run without starving its workers, then the industry must be closed down. If the workers on the land have not enough to eat, then the intermediaries who deprive them of their full share must go. The philosophy of socialism has permeated the entire structure of society the world over and almost the only point in dispute is the pace and methods of advance to its realization . . . India will have to end her poverty and inequality, though she may evolve her own methods and may adapt the ideals to the genius of her race.'

This enthusiasm for socialism was not shared by Motilal, whose aristocratic, legal background, saturated with ideas of political liberalism and *laissez faire*, predisposed him against an economic philosophy which aimed at an artificial

egalitarianism. There is a significant reference to socialism in Motilal's presidential address to the Calcutta Congress, when he sounded a note of warning against the fate which has been pursuing [us] for the last twenty years or more . . . It is close upon our heels already in the garb of socialism and will devour both complete independence and dominion status if you let it approach nearer'.

The conflict between father and son was in a sense a conflict between age and youth. Every generation has its angry young men, though the objects of anger change. Had not Motilal himself defied the superstitions and the taboos of his caste and community as tenaciously as his son, thirty years later, was fighting the political and economic shibboleths of the Congress Old Guard?

During the closing months of 1928, tension in Anand Bhawan was at its peak. Braj Kumar Nehru (now India's Ambassador in Washington) was a student at Allahabad, and stayed at Anand Bhawan during 1928-9. He recalls that Motilal told him one day: 'Father and son are atilt, but Jawahar would not be my son if he did not stick to his guns'. Motilal's irritability was exacerbated by the impetuosity of his son, who appeared to be taking extreme positions, associating with young firebrands, and making himself an easy target for the Government. 'If Jawaharlal lives for ten years', Motilal told Braj Kumar, 'he will change the face of India', and then added sadly: 'such men do not usually live long; they are consumed by the fire within them.'

As the Calcutta Congress drew near, Motilal wondered whether, like his friend C. R. Das at Gaya in 1922, he would see his policies repudiated by the very session over which he presided. He summoned Gandhi to the rescue. The Mahatma was none too well, but agreed to attend the Congress session. Behind closed door, Congress leaders dis-

cussed the crucial issue of 'Dominion Status' versus 'Independence', which threatened to split the Congress. In the 'Subjects Committee' which screened resolutions for the plenary session the discussions were long, heated and bitter. On December 27th, Gandhi suggested a *via media*; the Congress should adopt the whole of the Nehru Report, including the Dominion Status formula, but if it were not accepted by the Government within two years, the Congress should opt for complete independence and fight for it, if necessary, by invoking the weapon of civil disobedience.

Jawaharlal described the acceptance of Dominion Status as 'an extremely wrong and foolish act', and advocated civil disobedience if complete independence were not granted within a year. Three days later, when Gandhi's resolution came up before the plenary session, Bose opposed it and was supported, rather half-heartedly, by Jawaharlal. The voting—1,350 for, and 973 against—gave a clear majority to Gandhi's resolution, but the issue hung in the balance till almost the last moment.

Jawaharlal's vacillation at Calcutta, his conflict between his convictions and his loyalty to his father and Gandhi and the Congress, was then and later the subject of adverse comment. But vacillation, like silence, is sometimes useful in politics. It was a sound instinct which kept Jawaharlal from breaking with the Congress Old Guard in December 1928. As events were to show, it was he, not they, who had won at Calcutta. 'Complete Independence', instead of being the catchword of young radicals, bade fair to become the battle-cry of the Indian National Congress. And, most important of all, the way had been opened for Gandhi's return to active politics.

The Nehru Report was an earnest attempt on the part of Indian leaders to come to terms with each other and with Britain. Gandhi aptly described Motilal as 'an emi-

nently worthy ambassador of a nation that is in need of and in the mood to make an honourable compromise'.¹ The Report could not claim the adherence of all the parties; but it was endorsed by a vast majority of them. Yet there is little evidence to show that it received a serious consideration in official circles. 'The British Parliament could never accept a position,' said the Viceroy on January 28, 1929, 'which would reduce it to being a mere registrar of the decisions of other persons.'²

The appointment of the Simon Commission had provoked Indian parties to frame an alternative constitution. But the very existence of the Simon Commission became an argument for ignoring that constitution. Ironically enough, events were soon to move fast and to consign the Simon Commission's own report—even before it was completed and published—to the waste-paper basket of history.

¹ *Young India*, July 26, 1928.

Speeches of Lord Irwin, vol. I, p. 538.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR ON THE BRINK

Gandhi had gone to Calcutta reluctantly. He had not intended to take an active, much less a leading, part in the deliberations of the Congress, but the tide of events overtook him and left him, and indeed the entire Congress leadership, a little breathless and bewildered. If the Calcutta session registered a rise in the political barometer, it also revealed a disconcerting lack of discipline and cohesion in the party.

It seemed scarcely possible that the British Government would accept the Nehru Report and grant Dominion Status by the end of 1929. But what chance had the Congress of putting up a fight, if it did not put its own house in order? Immediately after the Congress session, Gandhi wrote urging Jawaharlal, who had been re-elected as the General Secretary of the All India Congress Committee, to tour the country and reorganize the Congress committees. Jawaharlal complained of 'an extraordinary paucity of workers'. 'They are practically non-existent,' he told the Mahatma.

Early in 1929 Gandhi was planning a long trip abroad. He discussed the pros and cons of the trip with his entourage and with friends in India and abroad. Motilal, who was also consulted, advised a postponement in a letter to Gandhi (January 14, 1929): 'It is quite certain that the year just begun is going to be an eventful one. What precise trend the events will take, it is impossible to say, but it is highly probable that there will be considerable excitement both at home and abroad...'

Motilal's forecast that 1929 would be a year of excitement proved true. In March Gandhi was arrested in Calcutta on the charge of using a public thoroughfare for a

bonfire of foreign cloth. He was fined one rupee, which was paid by someone without his knowledge. The debates in the Legislative Assembly became piquant. The Public Safety Bill and the Trade Dispute Bill brought on a clash between the Government and the Opposition, and an undeclared war between Speaker Patel and the official benches. Verbal explosives were followed by chemical explosives. On April 8th, two young men, Bhagat Singh and B. K. Dutt, threw bombs in the Legislative Assembly with the intention (as they put it later) 'not to kill but to make the deaf hear'. There was a chain of terrorist outrages and a number of conspiracy cases were started. Some of the young revolutionaries caught popular imagination and became heroes overnight.

The Calcutta Congress had given 'a year of grace and a polite ultimatum to the British Government'. A struggle in 1930 seemed not a possibility but a certainty. It was obvious that the next Congress session was going to be a momentous one; the choice of its president had therefore a special significance. Since Gandhi alone could lead a struggle, his choice for the presidency seemed natural, almost inevitable. In 1929 Motilal again pressed the claims of his son on Gandhi. As in 1927, he put the issue on a public rather than a private plane. While Motilal was pressing his son's claims for the Congress presidency, Jawaharlal himself was imploring Gandhi to leave him alone.

At the Lucknow meeting of the All India Congress Committee in September, Gandhi made it clear that he would not accept his own nomination, and pressed for Jawaharlal's. Vallabhbhai Patel withdrew. Jawaharlal was elected un-animously, but felt hurt and a little humiliated by the mode of his election; as he put it later, he climbed to his high office not by the 'main entrance, or even a side entrance',

but 'by a trap door'. He was conscious of the gulf between his ideas and those of most of the Congress leaders. Motilal was delighted at the election of his son, and seemed hardly aware of the conflict that was raging in Jawaharlal's heart. It was left to the poetic diction of Sarojini Naidu to capture their divergent moods. 'I wonder,' she wrote to Jawaharlal on September 29, 1929, 'if in the whole of India there was yesterday a prouder heart than your father's or a heavier heart than yours. . . . I feel you have been given a challenge as well as offered a tribute.'

If the Lahore Congress was a challenge to Jawaharlal's capacity for leadership, it was even a greater challenge to Irwin's statesmanship. Irwin was a wiser and sadder man since he had concurred in the proposal for an all-white commission. He sincerely wished to reverse the process of estrangement of Indian opinion which had gone on unchecked since November 1927. In the summer of 1929, the Viceroy went to England for a mid-term holiday and took the opportunity of discussing Indian affairs with British statesmen. Irwin's mission was facilitated by a change of government in England. A Labour ministry headed by Ramsay MacDonald took office in June 1929. Irwin secured the endorsement of the British Cabinet for his proposal for a Round Table Conference in London between the representatives of India and Britain to discuss the framing of a new Indian constitution. He was authorized to herald the announcement of the conference by a declaration affirming that the goal of British policy in India was Dominion Status.

Irwin returned to India on October 25, 1929. Six days later came his long-expected declaration :

'In view of the doubts which have been expressed both in Great Britain and India regarding the intentions of the British Government in enacting the Statute of 1919, I am

authorized to state clearly that in their judgment it is implied in the declaration of 1917 that the natural issue of India's constitutional progress, as there contemplated, is the attainment of Dominion Status. . . .'

The Viceregal announcement was an 'ingeniously worded document' which could mean much or little. The Congress leaders, scanning the horizon for a gesture which could open the path to self-government and prevent a clash with the Government, discerned the possibility of a change of heart.

The Viceroy had done his public relations job so well that Sapru, V.J. Patel and Malaviya were able to arrange a leaders' conference on November 1st—a day after the declaration—and to issue a 'joint manifesto' welcoming the declaration, under the signatures of Gandhi, Motilal, Ansari, Sapru, Maharaja of Mahmudabad, Vallabhbai Patel, and even Jawaharlal.

The Viceroy's announcement was thus well received in India, but in England a storm broke over him and the Labour Government. The British Press and Parliament subjected his words to a protracted post-mortem. Under heavy fire, the Labour Government was driven to the defensive. The Secretary of State explained away the declaration as 'a restatement', and an 'interpretation' of Montagu's declaration of August 1917.

The debate in the British Parliament damaged the emotional bridge which the declaration of October 31 had sought to build. During the succeeding six weeks, Irwin set out with the willing co-operation of Sapru, Patel and Jinnah, to repair the damage. Sapru requested Motilal to summon a meeting of the signatories of the Delhi Manifesto at Allahabad where the Congress Working Committee was to meet on November 16th. Sapru succeeded in securing an endorsement of the Delhi Manifesto, and passed on the good news

to the Viceroy's camp. He suggested that if Mr. Gandhi could see His Excellency and have a free talk with him, it might lead to an easier situation.

Jinnah, who met the Viceroy at Bombay, also advised him to see Gandhi. Sarojini Naidu—at Jinnah's instance—readily commended the proposal to the Mahatma. V. J. Patel and Sapru remained in touch with Motilal.

The interview with the Viceroy, on which such great hopes had been built, took place in the Viceroy's House at New Delhi on December 23rd. It proved a complete fiasco. The Viceroy felt almost personally betrayed; the edifice he had been constructing laboriously since the summer crumbled to pieces before his eyes. The intermediaries professed to be bewildered, and blamed the failure on Gandhi.

What Gandhi wanted—and needed—on the eve of the Lahore Congress, was something definite, some proof of the British desire to part with power. Irwin, chastened by recent criticisms in England, was not in a position to make a precise commitment; on the contrary he was deliberately playing for safety.

As for Wedgwood Benn, the Secretary of State for India, despite the eulogies he earned from his colleagues in the Labour Party, he was under no illusions as to his limitations. 'We cannot face an election on an Indian issue,' Benn had frankly told Fenner Brockway soon after taking office. The Labour Cabinet could not last a day without the support of the Liberals; a radical departure in India was sure to unite Liberals and Conservatives and to sweep the Labour Party out of office. There is no evidence that Benn and Irwin were convinced of the feasibility, or even of the justice of conceding full Dominion Status in 1930, but even if they had been, they could not have carried the British Parliament and the public opinion with them. It needed a series of

Satyagraha campaigns, the Second World War, and a Labour Government in power (not merely in office) to effect a real transfer of power from Britain to India. It is impossible to resist the conclusion that the chances of a settlement in December 1929, were overrated by the 'peace-makers', who were victims of their own optimism.

A shrewd observer had predicted early in December that 'Motilal Nehru will in the end be overcome by his paternal affection'.¹ It was not only paternal affection, but the aftermath of the parliamentary debates and the imminence of the Lahore Congress, which had led Motilal to fall into line with his son. He had indeed confessed to V. J. Patel, a fortnight before the interview with the Viceroy, that he 'did not expect any results' from it. 'At present,' he added, 'all roads lead to Lahore.'

¹Jagadisan, *Letters of Srinivasa Sastri*, pp. 296-7.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

FREEDOM'S BATTLE

Jawaharlal arrived at Lahore on December 25th to preside over the 1929 Congress. He received a welcome which, in the words of the *Tribune*, the local nationalist daily, 'even the kings might envy'. He was the first president-elect of the Congress to ride a horse—a white charger—followed by a detachment of Congress cavalry. The capital of the Punjab wore a festive look; the streets were canopied with bunting and sparkled with coloured lights. The procession swelled as it surged through the narrow streets of Lahore. Windows, roofs and even trees were crowded with spectators. Motilal and Swarup Rani watched the spectacle from the balcony of the Bhalla Shoe Company of Anarkali, and joined with others in showering flower-petals on their son. Never before in the history of the Indian National Congress had a son succeeded his father as president. As Motilal made over charge to Jawaharlal, he quoted a Persian adage: '*Herche ke pidar natawanad, pesar tamam kunad.*' (What the father is unable to accomplish, the son achieves). This fatherly wish was prophetic.

The Lahore Congress declared that the agreement to Dominion Status in the Nehru Report had lapsed; henceforth Swaraj would mean 'complete independence'. Congress members in central and provincial legislatures were called upon to resign. At midnight on December 31st, the flag of independence was unfurled on the bank of the Ravi. There were scenes of wild enthusiasm in the Congress camp; Jawaharlal danced round the flagstaff.

The die had been cast. Once again after nine years the Congress had dared to defy the British Empire. Once again it was going to be blood, sweat and prison for those who followed the Mahatma. But Motilal's mind was made up. To Ansari, who in February 1930, was poised on the razor-edge of indecision, Motilal wrote :

'I hope you will give me the credit of fully realizing what it means to me and mine to throw my lot with Gandhiji in the coming struggle. Nothing but a deep conviction that the time for the greatest effort and the greatest sacrifice has come would have induced me to expose myself at my age and with my physical disabilities, and with my family obligations to the tremendous risks I am incurring. I hear the clarion call of the country and I obey.'

The Lahore Congress had authorized the All India Congress Committee to launch civil disobedience. But everyone knew that the lead would be given by Gandhi. As the new year dawned, the Government as well as the people waited for the Mahatma's next move. He called for the celebration of 'Independence Day' on January 26th. On that day, hundreds of thousands of people in the towns and villages of India met and took a pledge that 'it was a crime against man and God to submit to British rule'.

The popular response to the celebration of 'Independence Day' heartened Gandhi. Towards the end of February he announced that he proposed to open his campaign by breaking the salt laws. The salt-tax, though relatively small (in 1930 it amounted to no more than three annas per head) hit the poorest in the land. But somehow, salt did not seem to fit into a struggle for national independence. The first impulse of the Government, as of the Congress intellectual, was to ridicule the 'kindergarten stage of revolution' and to laugh away the idea that the King-Emperor could be unseated by boiling sea-water

in a kettle. Motilal was amused, even angered, by the apparent irrelevance of Gandhi's move. To Motilal, as indeed to many others, it seemed that salt had become, like fasting and *charkha*, another of the Mahatma's hobby-horses.

Gandhi decided to inaugurate the campaign by leading a band of volunteers from Sabarmati to Dandi on the west coast. The prayer meeting in the *Ashram* on March 11th had a record attendance. 'Our cause is strong,' said Gandhi, 'our means the purest and God is with us. There is no defeat for Satyagrahis till they give up truth. I pray for the battle which begins tomorrow.' Next morning, Gandhi and his seventy-eight companions began the 241-mile trek from Ahmedabad to Dandi. The march did not, as the Government anticipated, prove a fiasco; it electrified not only the districts through which Gandhi's path lay, but the whole country. Salt became the symbol of national defiance.

Both Motilal and Jawaharlal were present at the meeting of the All India Congress Committee at Ahmedabad in the third week of March, which empowered Jawaharlal, as Congress president, to act on its behalf, to nominate his successor, and to fill vacancies in the Working Committee. From Ahmedabad, the Nehrus hurried to Jambosar, a small village in Broach district, where Gandhi was scheduled to halt on his way to Dandi. It was at this meeting in the early hours of March 23rd that Motilal decided to make a gift of Anand Bhawan (renamed as Swaraj Bhawan—"The abode of independence") to the Congress. The family had already moved into the smaller house which had been built in the compound and which was to be and is still called Anand Bhawan.

Motilal's decision to give rather than sell the old house, which might have fetched a lakh or two, was prompted

by his resolve to throw his all into the battle which Gandhi had begun. The formal ceremony took place on April 6th, the D-day for the Salt Satyagraha, when Jawaharlal as Congress president accepted the gift from his father.

By early April, the Government of India had discovered the dangerous potentialities of Gandhi's strategy.¹ Immediately after the Lahore Congress, the Viceroy had been assured of support for 'firm executive action' by Secretary of State Benn, and exhorted to handle 'the revolutionary leaders with firm determination' by Premier MacDonald. From April onwards the Congress was subjected to the sternest repression in its long history; the Government sought to strangle Satyagraha with an iron ring of ordinances, ten of which were issued during the next nine months.

As always, the Government were cautious in laying their hands on Gandhi, but other leaders were not spared. Vallabhbhai Patel was arrested on April 7th, Jawaharlal, who had been energetically co-ordinating the movement from Allahabad, was arrested on April 14th. He was sentenced to six months' imprisonment and taken to Naini gaol. He nominated his father as 'acting president' of the Congress.

For some months Motilal's health had been causing concern. Dr. Ansari, who examined him on his return from Jambosar, was so alarmed that he immediately communicated his findings to Gandhi. Motilal turned a deaf ear to Ansari's advice. He refused to step aside and rest so long as the country was in the throes of a struggle, and his son in gaol. These were stirring months for Indian nationalism. Once again, and not for the last time, Gandhi's knack for organizing Indian masses for corporate action delighted the

¹Nanda, B.R., *Mahatma Gandhi*, pp.293—6.

nationalists as much as it discomfited the authorities. The Director of the Central Intelligence Bureau specially noted the 'awakening among Indian women, and the fact that the movement has spread to the rural areas'.

Of the 'awakening of women', which was the most striking feature of 1930, Allahabad and the Nehru family were a fine example. Not only Vijayalakshmi and Krishna, but the aged Swarup Rani and the fragile Kamala were in the front line, organizing processions, addressing meetings, picketing foreign cloth and liquor shops. Motilal did not like the idea of women rushing about the town in the hot weather, but Jawaharlal was delighted when he received the news in gaol. 'By the time I come out,' he wrote. 'I expect to find the womenfolk running everything'.

Meanwhile Motilal was expending the last of his energy in directing the campaign. He took a keen interest in the work of the Peshawar Inquiry Committee, of which he had appointed his son-in-law Ranjit Pandit secretary and V. J. Patel president.

In June Motilal went to Bombay—the storm-centre of the movement; with him went Swarup Rani and Kamala. They received a tremendous welcome, but also witnessed some of the fiercest attacks by the police on Congress processions. It was a crowded and memorable fortnight, but its strain finally broke Motilal's physical frame. On return to Allahabad, he planned to leave for Mussoorie for a short holiday on July 1st, but he was arrested on the previous day and taken to Naini gaol, where his son was already serving a six-month term. The barrack in which the Nehrus were lodged was not too comfortable, and the verandah attached to it was too narrow to serve as a protection against sun or rain. But Motilal would not hear of leaving the company of his son for more spacious accommodation in another part of the gaol. The Govern-

ment were considerate enough to order the construction of a new verandah, but it was completed too late to be of any use to Motilal.

Jawaharlal took charge of his ailing father and nursed him with a devotion which moved him deeply.

'Hari',¹ Motilal wrote, 'could very well take a leaf out of Jawahar's book in the matter of serving me. From early morning tea to the time I retire for the night, I find everything I need in its proper place. The minutest detail is carefully attended to and it has never become necessary to ask for anything, which had so frequently to be done at Anand Bhawan . . . Jawahar anticipates everything and leaves nothing for me to do. I wish there were many fathers to boast of such sons.'

To circumvent the gaol rule of one letter a fortnight, Motilal had the brilliant idea of writing 'a circular letter' addressed to all members of the family—outside the gaol. The letter dated July 16, 1930, sounds almost like an after-dinner chat. 'You are doing a little too much for your old bones,' he wrote to his wife. 'Use them sparingly if you wish to see Swaraj established in your life-time.' 'Your letter is not as detailed as I expected it to be,' he wrote to his daughter-in-law, 'and there is no news about your health—not a word.' He gave Kamala detailed instructions for planting fast-growing creepers and *doob* grass, and for keeping trespassers off Swaraj Bhawan: 'All sorts of people are about these days, and every wearer of a Gandhi cap is not a follower of Gandhi.' To Vijayalakshmi he wrote: 'It was silly of you to have left Bombay without proper treatment. You seem to be too anxious to receive an invitation [to gaol]. There would be some point in it, if you could be lodged with [your] brother and myself, but that is impossible.'

¹Motilal's personal servant.

He chided Krishna for not writing : 'How is it, madness that you have not sent a line this week?' To his twelve-year-old grand-daughter Indira, who had been drilling the children's volunteer 'army' (*vanar sena*), he wrote : 'What is the position in the 'monkey army' ? I suggest the wearing of a tail by every member of it, the length of which should be in proportion to the rank of the wearer.'

The comparative calm of Naini gaol was disturbed on July 27, 1930, by the arrival of the Liberal leaders Tej Bahadur Sapru and M. R. Jayakar. They came on a peace-mission which, ironically enough, was initiated by an interview given by Motilal to George Slocombe of the London *Daily Herald*. At the instance of V. J. Patel, Motilal had agreed to meet Slocombe. The interview, which took place on June 20th at Bombay, became the first link in that curious and unexpected chain of events which culminated in the Gandhi-Irwin Pact eight months later.

'I asked him,' wrote Slocombe¹, 'what his attitude would be if he were to receive an invitation to the Round Table Conference. "My reply would be," he told me, "to ask you on what basis the conference is convened...if it was made clear...that the conference would meet to frame a constitution for free India, subject to such adjustments of our mutual relations as are required by the special needs and conditions of India and our past association, I for one would be disposed to recommend that Congress should accept an invitation to participate in the conference. We must be masters in our own household, but are ready to agree to reasonable terms for the period of transfer of power from the British administration in India to a responsible Indian Government. We must meet

¹Sapru Papers.

the British people in order to discuss these terms as nation to nation on an equal footing." Motilal's statement to Slocombe was, on the whole, a restatement of the position Gandhi and he had adopted during the interview with the Viceroy.

In Naini prison Sapru and Jayakar argued at length with Motilal and Jawaharlal, but found both equally imperious to the idea of a settlement with the Government, and obviously unwilling to commit themselves without consulting Gandhi. The Government then arranged for the Nehru's journey in a special train to Poona. There were protracted discussions in Yeravda Gaol in which Gandhi, the Nehrus, Vallabhbhai Patel, Sarojini Naidu, Jairamdas Daulatram, Syed Mahmud, Sapru and Jayakar joined. The peace-makers reported the results of these abortive negotiations to the Viceroy.

These negotiations showed that Gandhi was willing to bargain on details—a tendency which was to make possible, for good or ill, the conclusion of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. Motilal and Jawaharlal, on the contrary, insisted on a concrete commitment regarding the devolution of power from British to Indian hands.

On this visit to Yeravda Gaol, Motilal told Lt.-Colonel Martin, the Superintendent, that he took very 'simple and light food', and then gave a list of his requirements which (as Jawaharlal put it) would have been considered simple and ordinary food only at the Ritz and the Savoy in London. Colonel Martin, who had been feeding Gandhi on goat's milk, dates and oranges, could scarcely conceal his amusement at the sophisticated tastes of the elder Nehru. Not the least amusing part of the story is that the Bombay Government wrote to the Government of India to foot the bill for the extra expenses incurred by the dietary requirements of the Nehrus at Poona.

Enforced rest in gaol and devoted nursing by his son could not by themselves restore Motilal to health. He rejected an offer of release on medical grounds, and even telegraphed to Irwin not to show him any favours. But his health was failing fast, he was losing weight and becoming a shadow of himself. The Government had no intention of incurring the odium of his death in gaol and released him on September 11th. Three days later, he left for Mussoorie. With him went Swarup Rani, Krishna, Vijayalakshmi and her children.

Kamala did not accompany her father-in-law to Mussoorie. She was too tied up with the local Congress activities to be able to leave Allahabad. Her own health had already begun to fail.

Jawaharlal was released on October 11th, and tried to make the most of his short-lived freedom for the national movement. He convened a meeting of the executive of the Provincial Congress Committee and persuaded it to launch a no-tax campaign in the rural areas. A district peasants' conference was summoned to meet at Allahabad on October 19th. Meanwhile, accompanied by Kamala, Jawaharlal went to Mussoorie, where his father was convalescing. It was a happy family reunion for three precious days, and a wonderful holiday for Jawaharlal—the last he was to spend with his father.

On October 18th, Jawaharlal and Kamala returned to Allahabad in time for the peasants' conference. On the following day, the rest of the family also arrived at Allahabad. Jawaharlal received them at the railway station and immediately afterwards, accompanied by his wife, went to a public meeting. As he was returning home in the evening his car was stopped almost at the gates of Anand Bhawan, he was arrested and taken to Naini Gaol. Kamala went home alone to give the news to the waiting family. Motilal

was deeply distressed by the re-arrest of his son within a week. He pulled himself together and announced that he would no longer be an invalid. Strangely enough he suddenly seemed much better; even the blood in his sputum, which had been defying all treatment, ceased.

Motilal took back the reins of the movement. He was once again in high spirits. 'I take my Gandhi cap off to the Naoroji clan,' he wrote on November 10th to Mrs. Gosi Captain of Bombay, 'for the great part they are taking in the national struggle.' 'It has been decided by Pandit Motilal Nehru,' wrote the Secretary of All India Congress Committee to all Provincial Congress Committees, 'that the 16th of November, 1930, should be observed as "Jawahar Day" throughout the length and breadth of India as a protest against the savage sentence of two and a half years passed on the Congress President.' On November 16th at hundreds of meetings all over the country the offending passages from Jawaharlal's speech were read. At Allahabad, Swarup Rani, Vijayalakshmi, Krishna and Indira joined the procession and the meeting in Purushotamdas Park was addressed among others by Kamala, who read the whole of the 'seditious' speech for which her husband had been convicted.

The shock of his son's arrest had enabled Motilal to summon the reserves of his dwindling strength for a last desperate effort. But will-power alone could not stem the progress of the fatal disease. Chronic asthma had resulted in advanced fibrosis of the lungs, forming a tumour on the right side of the chest, which pressed upon the blood-vessels.

On November 17th Motilal left for Calcutta where he was examined by two eminent doctors, Nilratan Sarkar and Jivraj Mehta. The Governor of Bengal generously allowed Dr. B. C. Roy to leave Alipore Central prison for a few hours to make a further examination. 'The X-rays have

revealed,' Motilal wrote to Vijayalakshmi from Calcutta, 'that the heart, the lungs and liver are all affected.' A virulent attack of malaria further lowered his resistance. He moved into a garden house in the suburbs of Calcutta, where he was joined by the whole family except Kamala, who was busy with Congress work in Allahabad. He toyed with the idea of making a voyage to Singapore. But he did not go to Singapore. He was approaching not a new voyage but the end of an old one.

The news of Kamala's arrest on January 1, 1931, brought Motilal back to Allahabad. On January 12th, when he turned up for the fortnightly interview in Naini prison, Jawaharlal was shocked to see his swollen face and the rapid deterioration in his health. A fortnight later, Gandhi, Jawaharlal and all members of the Congress Working Committee, 'original' and 'substitute', were released. This brought Jawaharlal and Kamala back home. The presence of his son and of Gandhi, who had left for Allahabad immediately after his release, seemed to have a soothing effect on Motilal. A number of Congress leaders came to Allahabad to review the political situation. Motilal was too ill to take part in their discussions but he insisted on meeting them. He sat up in an easy chair to receive them as they came in twos and threes; the swelling had obliterated all expression on his face, but there was a glitter in his eye, his head bowed, and his hands folded in salutation; his lips opened for a word of greeting and even of humour. When the constriction in his throat rendered conversation too painful, he wrote on little slips of paper.

Three of the most eminent doctors in the country, Ansari, Jivraj Mehta and B. C. Roy, were attending him. On February 4th, they decided to take him to Lucknow for deep X-ray treatment, which was not available at Allahabad. Motilal was reluctant to go; he preferred to die in his beloved

ed Anand Bhawan. But he yielded to the persuasion of the doctors—and of Gandhi.

His courage and humour remained till the last. He joked with Swarup Rani about going ahead of her and waiting in heaven to receive her. He did not, he said, want anyone to pray for him after his death; he had made his own way in this world, and hoped to do so in the next as well. Pointing to the swelling on his face, he said: 'Have I not qualified for a beauty competition?' Turning to the masseur, who was attending on him, he asked: 'Mr. Austin, how many Baby Austins do you possess?' 'Mahatma-ji,' he said to Gandhi, 'you have perfect control over your sleep. I have perfect control over my digestion; it never fails me.'

The end came in the early hours of February 6th, while Swarup Rani and Jawaharlal were at his bedside. For several hours his strength had been gradually ebbing; he was speechless but conscious. One wonders what thoughts crossed his mind, whether in those twilight hours he recalled the strange adventure that life had been to him: the fatherless childhood in Agra and Khetri; the sheltering care of Nandlal and the Persian lessons from the old Qazi; the carefree boyhood in Cawnpore and Allahabad and the good old Principal Harrison; the death of Nandlal and the struggle for survival at the Allahabad Bar; the palmy days in Anand Bhawan, the drive in state to the High Court, the poetry and politics and champagne in the evening; the delightful interludes in Europe, and Jawahar at Harrow, and little Nanni's birthday in Bad Ems; the glorious morning of Jawahar's home-coming in Mussoorie and the Nehru Wedding Camp at Delhi; the Home Rule furore and the coming of Gandhi and Satyagraha; the months of a agonizing suspense and the exhilaration of the final plunge; Chauri Chaura and the pleasures and pains of Gandhi's leadership;

the bouts with Hailey and Muddiman in the Assembly Chamber; Kamala in Switzerland and the last trip to Europe; the Simon Commission and the framing of a Swaraj constitution, the clash and compromise at Calcutta; the hero's welcome for Jawahar in Lahore—and then another struggle. That struggle continued, but it was in safe hands, guided by 'the head of Gandhi and the voice of Jawaharlal'.

EPILOGUE

In June 1912, two months before the return of his son from England, Motilal had confided to his brother that he was looking forward to an early retirement 'in peace and comfort after a most strenuous life of active work extending over thirty-five years'. Little did he know that his last years were to be the most crowded, the most strenuous and the most memorable of his life. If he had indeed been able to enjoy his well-earned retirement, he might have lived to a ripe old age, holding court in Anand Bhawan, entertaining his friends, holidaying in Kashmir or the South of France. His children and grandchildren would then have cherished his memory as that of a fascinating, if somewhat formidable and mercurial patriarch. And in the Bar Libraries of his province, and more particularly of Allahabad, he would have been remembered as a brilliant lawyer, who had lived well and laughed well—one of those fortunate few who had made—and spent—a fortune at the Bar.

Motilal was destined for a larger role than that of a genial patriarch or a local celebrity. He was to become one of the heroes of India's struggle for freedom. He had not the missionary zeal of his son, nor the ascetic streak of the Mahatma, but Satyagraha appealed to that fighting spirit which in youth had gloried in such sports as wrestling and in defying the tyranny of his caste and community. He had always been ready to 'break his lance with a foeman worthy of his steel'. In the armour of this happy warrior there was a chink: the love of his son, but this was his strength as well as his weakness; it turned the last years of his life from a placid pool into a raging torrent, but it also lifted him from the position of a prosperous lawyer to the apex of national leadership.

So long had Motilal been known to admire English ways, English traditions and English institutions that when he turned rebel against the Raj, the feelings of his numerous English friends (in the words of an Anglo-Indian journal) 'resembled those of a fond Edwardian father whose delightful daughter became a suffragette and broke his windows'. The transition was in fact not so sudden as it seemed to his contemporaries; nearly a decade before Gandhi launched non-co-operation, Motilal's politics had been shifting leftward. Nevertheless, it is doubtful if, at the age of sixty, he would have made a clean break with his past and plunged into the unknown, but for the unshakable resolve of his son to follow the Mahatma. Motilal loved the good things of life, but he loved his son even more.

The political partnership between father and son was the more remarkable because of their intellectual and temperamental differences. Motilal was the stern realist, Jawaharlal the irrepressible idealist; Motilal had the clearer head, Jawaharlal had the larger vision. Jawaharlal—like the Mahatma—learned to strike the deep chords in Indian humanity; he took to the crowd, and the crowd took to him. Motilal's gifts were more suited to a legislative chamber than to the street-corner; his public speeches, though spiced with Persian proverbs, were closely reasoned; it was truly said of him that he gave to the mob what was meant for a parliament. Jawaharlal belonged to an uncommon genre: he was an intellectual in politics; his sensitiveness to currents of thought and events in India and abroad kept his politics perpetually in flux and made it difficult for his father to keep pace with him. This led to a clash, which despite its toll of tension and anguish, did much good to both father and son and also to the common cause they sought to serve. It spurred on the ageing father and restrained the youthful impetuosity of the son: it also made them recognize afresh how much they meant to each other.

The process of political education was not one-sided. Young Nehru also owed much to his father. For one thing, he was spared the distraction of working for a living, which might have compromised his politics and kept him away from the centre of events. For another, he could not but be influenced by his father's example : his integrity, pride, courage, tremendous capacity for work, devotion to detail and freedom from pettiness.

During the nineteen twenties when non-co-operation had collapsed and Gandhi had taken to the *ashram* and the *charkha* and nationalist politics were at a low ebb, the Swarajists led by C. R. Das and Motilal kept up the spirit of resistance to foreign rule. The Swarajists rendered another more important, if unintended, service. By bringing the Congress into the legislatures, even for the avowed purpose of wrecking them, the Swarajists helped to acquaint the country with the mechanism, the procedures and the traditions of parliamentary government. The Swarajist experience was thus not so barren as it seemed in 1930; it created precedents which helped the Congress to contest the elections and to accept office in 1937; it facilitated the installation of a fully-fledged representative government at the centre in 1946.

Motilal was one of those outstanding men who were drawn into the national movement under Gandhi's inspiration in 1920, and who gave much to the national movement because they had much to give. He seemed cut out for the role of a great parliamentarian with his splendid presence, his gift of persuasive advocacy, his freedom from doctrinaire rigidity and his capacity for personal friendliness towards political opponents. These are qualities which India will need in her leaders if she is to maintain her democratic institutions in full vigour, and build a better future for her people in freedom and unity.

He also represented another great tradition, that of a liberal secularism. There was hardly any Indian leader of his time who was more fully emancipated from the bonds of orthodoxy and sectarianism. He fought the narrowness of his co-religionists and the mounting ambitions of Muslim communalism with equal tenacity. His secularism did not stem from political expediency, but from that broad-based culture which had nourished several generations of Nehrus in Delhi and Kashmir. He was a product of the mingling of three cultures—the Aryan, the Mughal and the European.

His sacrifices and fighting statesmanship cast a spell on his generation and it is but natural that he should be remembered today chiefly as a legendary figure. He was, however, no copy-book hero. He was refreshingly human in his school-boy exuberance, insatiable curiosity and the bubbling enthusiasm which enabled him to make of his life an unending adventure and to laugh right to the very gate of death. He had his failings too—pride, arrogance and a quick temper—but the sum of all these faults and virtues was a fascinating human being. The heroic and the human were happily blended in him, and in nothing was he more human than in his love for his son. Motilal's ambitions had been all for his son: his son's were all for India. For India Jawaharlal took risks and endured hardship which filled Motilal's heart with a perpetual conflict between paternal pride and paternal anxiety.

Asked to describe Motilal's greatest quality, Gandhi said: 'Love of his son.' 'Was it not love of India?' the Mahatma was asked. 'No,' he replied, 'Motilal's love for India was derived from his love for Jawaharlal.'

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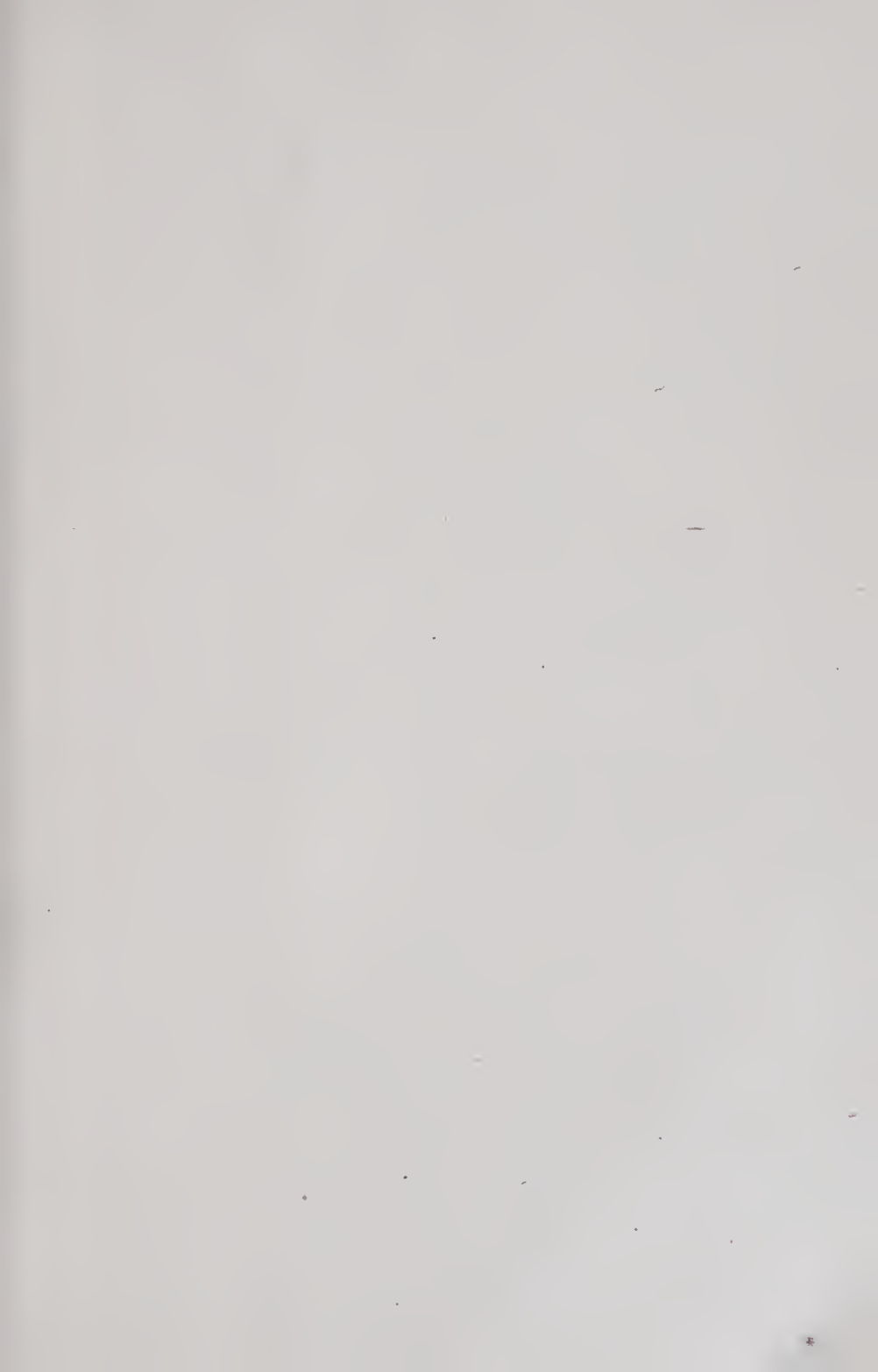
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